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nestled gave to it a sylvan charm, a picturesque beauty all its own. If the truth must be told, the first acquaintance resulted in a Yarrow-Visited not of disillusionment and depression of spirit. Hetampur, which had sounded big gongs in my imagination ever since my going to it was settled, subsided into a gentle, though musical tinkle, when I actually saw it. That the Hetampur Rajbati and the Hetampur College could be housed in such a small, sleepy village seemed an unsolved riddle to my immature apprehension.

But before long these doubts and questionings resolved themselves into loving acceptance of the real. My maternal uncle, the late Ashutosh Roychoudhury being the Headmaster of the collegiate school, I had my seat in the school Boarding house at the outskirts of the village instead of the distantly situated Mansayar college Hostel. My first days at college we like introduction into a new world to which I took some time to adjust myself. The late Radhikamohan choudhury was our principal and his sweet and charming ways disarmed our fears and endeared him to his students. Never was the rod of authority held in more loving and indulgent hands. We do not remember to have ever received any harsh word or reprimand from him and his gentle personality radiated the warmth of love all round the college atmosphere. He used to teach us Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry, although

physics was his principal subject. Those were the days of multiple endowments and responsibilities, and the narrow intensity of specialisation had not yet cost its rigorous and exacting discipline on academic life.

✓ There was one professor in charge of the Arts subjects, English, History and Logic and the incumbent of this post kept on changing with rather disconcerting rapidity. The first was Sri Gurudas Sarkar, happily still alive, who in a few months left us to join the Executive Service as a Subordinate Deputy Magistrate and who has later established a secure position for himself in the world of scholarship by his original contributions in the realms of History and Fine Arts. During his short stay with us he impressed us with his enthusiasm and his serious application to duty. He was specially kind to me did much to encourage me and draw out my latent aptitudes. The young minds which he sought to guide felt very keenly the pangs of separation when he left them for a more responsible sphere of work.

His successor, if I remember the sequence aright, was the late Jogendra-nath Mitra, who subsequently became Principal of Uttarpara College and was a noted philosopher. He had an accident while travelling in the newly opened Oudal-Sainthia branch line and left us on the eve of the Summer vacation. Later in life, I met him very frequently in Calcutta. He was always

affectionate to me, and though he had lost his sight, he showed himself a true philosopher by the uncomplaining firmness and the unruffled sweetness of temper with which he bore his affliction. He was a deeply religious man, securely anchored on his faith of God and patiently resigned to His will through all changes of fortune. Under him our taste in Logic was securely established and its rough ways made plain to our understanding. He was a musician of talent, but too shy ever to be persuaded to give a demonstration.

The last of the trio was Sri Atul Chandra Sen who stayed us out of our term. I met him in Calcutta while he was engaged in bringing out an edition of the Upanishads. He was an erudite scholar and a man who realised the ideal of plain living and high thinking. But his stay with us was of too short a duration to admit of his making any lasting impression on us.

But the most charming personality in the college staff was our Sanskrit teacher, the late Ambicacharan Roy Choudhury. He was distantly related to me as a maternal uncle and from the first day showered his love on me in a superabundant measure. He was domiciled in Hetampur for a long time and was on intimately familiar terms with the members of the Raj family. He was a man of sparkling wit and humour and his classes were an inexhaustible fountain of joy and entertainment for us. For every student in

the class, he had a repartee and anecdote ready at the tips of his tongue, which fitted his special case as exactly as the glove fits the hand. At the same time, he was a profound scholar and a highly successful teacher equally at home in bringing out the beauties of Sanskrit literature and expounding the intricacies of Sanskrit grammar. It was under his able teaching and inspiring guidance that I quickly made up my deficiencies in Sanskrit and acquired a taste for it which I retain even today. He bubbled over with merriment and joy and his rotundity of proportions, unfailing humour and keen, unblunted zest in life imparted to his personality a touch of Falstaffian greatness. Never shall I forget the witty anecdote, made a trifle pungent in the application, with which he wheedled out of Raja Ramranjan his arrears of salary. The Raja gave him his dues but cautioned him not to reveal the story to his other colleagues. He had such a touching confidence in my integrity and thorough dependableness, that despite all academic canons and precedents, he discussed with me, a first year student, the questions he was going to set in the Test Examination of my seniors in the Second year class and virtually set the paper not only with my full knowledge but almost with my active collaboration. I am thankful to God that the secret never leaked out and that my revered teacher had no reason to repent of his confidence.

earth could make him pass, so it did not matter whether he took the examination or shirked it. Fortunately, the boy recovered and Ramda' had not to make the sacrifice, although he proved too true a prophet so far as his own chances were concerned.

III

Although the hostel lived a life of its own away from the village, we had occasional and sometimes intimate contacts with the general life of the place. Coming and going from the hostel to college and back we had glimpses of the Ranjan palace with its high and long compound wall and were overawed by its splendour and magnificence which we had but few occasions to see at close quarters. We sometimes saw Raja Ramranjan or one or other of the Rajkumars whirling past us in their fine-looking landaus, and gazed at the swiftly passing figures as if they were denizens of another world. Some of the younger members of the Raj family we met in football and other sports and came to know them rather intimately. At times we were invited to functions and festivals at the Gouranga temple or the old Raj palace and particularly enjoyed the Saraswati Puja Celebrations which enjoyed a great fame in the neighbourhood and attracted people from far and near. The most outstanding event during our residence was the death of Rani Padma Sundari Devi, which evoked a wide-spread sorrow in the village

and cast a shadow of gloom on the whole atmosphere of the place. We watched with awe the elaborate rituals of the Sraddha ceremony, the huge concourse of Pandits and other distinguished guests which crowded the narrow streets of Hetampur, the large processions and Kirtan parties, the huge assemblage of the poor who were sumptuously fed and all the other accessories of an occasion of unusual pomp and sublimity that captured our youthful imagination and lingered in the memory. The college students were called upon to serve on the occasion, either as volunteers looking to the comforts of the guests or assisting at the distribution of food and in a general way maintaining order, and our services were suitably appreciated by a special feast offered to us. I and a fellow-student composed two poems on the occasion which, as far as I can recollect, were printed and distributed during the ceremony. I may incidentally remark that was the solitary poetic effusion which I had perpetrated in my life.

IV

The two years that we spent at Hetampur was a happy period for all of us, particularly for me. During my entire school life I had been suffering from malaria and had developed into an ill-nourished, underfed boy. It was the salubrious climate of Hetampur that for the first time drove out the germs of malaria in my system and

made me fully conscious of the exhilaration of perfect health. In my school days the orthodox doctrine of applying the rod as a preventive to the child's getting spoiled was implicitly belived in and applied with a gusto. Moreover we lived in an atmosphere of perpetual surveillance, where our every movement was rigidly prescribed from above and freedom of choice even in the smallest details sternly interdicted. At Hetampur all this burden was lifted from my life and a freer and more genial atmosphere expanded the sleeping, torpid faculties. It was like the contest between the sun and the wind to make the traveller doff his cloak. This new-born sense of freedom made me feel at home with my surroundings and realise my life not as a chain of inhibitions, but as an unfolding of new graces and aptitudes. I still remember our pleasant rambles through the woods fragrant with the smell of Sal and Mohua flowers, the discovery of quiet, unvisited nooks with an almost wordsworthian thrill, the occasional tramps to Dubrajpur, and the recently opened Railway Station there, the warm, convivial afternoons and evenings in which youth was free to congregate and expand itself and almost felt the sap of life circulating through the veins and in the blood. It was almost the idyllic life of our youthful dreams, and there was no untoward incident to strike a discordant note in its equable, tranquil harmony.

Hetampur enjoyed the unique distinction of being the site of the only College in the District and its contribution to the cause of higher education in a rather backward area is worthy of being chronicled in the history of Birbhum. The college is celebrating the completion of the sixtieth year of its existence with a justifiable sense of the pride of achievement. The very fact of its being situated in a rural area away from the distractions of town life added a unique feature to the quality of its training. The young student who is drawn here not only receives the usual kind of tuition in arts and sciences but is initiated, if he has the right receptive temper, into the very mystery of life. An atmosphere of peace and harmony wraps him round and he develops what is a cardinal effect of all our educational ventures—a special way of meeting and dealing with life. The very privations and discomforts he has to face, the simple food, the lack of modern amenities, the plain style of living, the careful economising of resources, intimate personal contact with teachers and fellow-students and the rural air which he breathes—all tend to foster a temper and philosophy of life which is of great value in the rapidly dissolving fabric of modern society. The immemorial spirit of Birbhum, with its simple agricultural life, its rooted traditions and hereditary pieties, its deep religious spirit embodied in its many sacred

shrines and places of pilgrimage, the **Baul, Vaishnava** and **Sakta** songs sweetening the air and dropping the dews of peace on the world-weary soul seem to linger on in this peaceful village that has kept itself at any rate partially free from the shrill, hysterical discontent, the complicated entanglements of present-day life. Hetampur, like a more far-famed University of the West, appears to breathe the last enchantment of the Middle Ages which in India is not as completely dead as in other parts of the world.

We are on the threshold of far-reaching changes in the educational sphere and rural colleges are expected to play an important role in this impending reconstruction. Our intellectual standards which are too low, our moral standards which have completely broken down and are in urgent need of rehabilitation, our social relations which have lost the cementing bond of a common ideal and in which class distinctions are without their old touch of sweetness and sympathy, our economic life which must be divested of the pure profit motive and endowed with a consciousness of our obligations to society, our administrative system drifting towards a machine-like callousness and impersonality, our religious

values which have all but dried up and been reduced to pulp and powder—all these factors of our life which are waiting to be revitalised and suited to the requirements of a fast-changing world hinge upon the pivot of an appropriate educational procedure and ideal which we shall have to build up. Hitherto we have not utilised the special opportunities of our educational institutions of the countryside; we have treated them as but rusty and creaking counterparts of our urban machinery which do not run so well. The passion for centralisation has gone too far to permit of our putting different institutions to their appropriate uses; instead of taking from them what they can easily offer we have forced upon them a task which they are ill-qualified to fulfill. All this will have to be changed if we are to reap the full harvest out of our educational seed-plots. I wish Hetampur College long years of ever-expanding service to the cause of education & contribution to nation-building through the creation of an efficient human agency. May its influence grow from more to more and may it go on training the future generations of our citizens who will build up the new Bengal of the future and assist her in her onward march to her cherished goal!

THE TRAGIC WORLD IN HARDY'S NOVELS

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Thomas Hardy in his own time was not recognised as an outstanding novelist. The practices of Richardson, Fielding, and later on, of Thackeray, Dickens, Austin in the world of novels established a particular form. In spite of the differences in their details of techniques and modes of presentation, novel as a form of art was thought to be a story interestingly told. Plot and characterisation were the necessary parts of, and subsidiary to, such an interesting story. Obviously enough the study of novels only a century ago was not a serious pursuit, but a leisurely pastime which a man or a woman might take to after day's toil. That a novel is a definite form of art and is different from a mere story by its own technique, mode of expression, plot and characterisation, quite distinct to itself, did not at that time engage so much attention of the public and letters as it does today. In short, the critical study of novels was not much of interest. The Victorian people were accustomed to the novels of Dickens, Thackeray, Austin and George Eliot, and developed a taste for such novels

which would present them middle-class or aristocratic characters, either wholly good or wholly bad, excite their enthralling interest by unravelling the mystery of a will and end with a happy union between the hero and heroine. A novel should present the triumph of truth over falsehood, virtue over vice, and chastity over villainy. The Victorian moral code and reticence were too keen for scenes of sensual and animal excitement. And the Victorian novelists toed blindly in the beaten track of morality and chastity of women. Into such a world burst forth the novels of Hardy. The immediate results were protests and condemnation.

The scanty appreciation of Hardy's novels by his contemporaries was no less due to his philosophy of life, dark and pessimistic as it is said, which ran counter to the prevailing buoyant optimism of the age. The Victorian era is the era of conquest in every sphere of life, of immense material achievements and, above all, of the newly found power of man as science rendered to him over Nature. The sceptical note of

Mathew Arnold and other writers was a feeble cry in the swelling material achievements. Hardy did not harp on the same tune of optimism but struck a discordant note, and thereby threw a dam against the dominant current of the time. It was quite but natural that the pent-up water would retort with fury.

Indeed, much of the adverse criticism levelled against Hardy in an angry outburst is gradually found to be untenable as the years are rolling on. With the dawn of the twentieth century the appreciation of his novels is gradually gaining ground. Critics of outstanding repute have already dwelt on the various sides of Hardy's novels and have also casually referred to their tragic spirit or intensity. In fact, the masterpieces of Hardy are all tragic in note and appeal. It would not be too much to remark that the power and potentiality of the novelist lie in the world of tragedies. The purpose of this essay is to make a study of the tragic world of Hardy's novels.

The tragic world of Hardy's novels has been epically conceived, but is adjusted to the modern set-up of the society. Homer conceived of his tragic world against the background of the ten year's battle in Troy, wherein Zeus and the Athenian and Trojan gods and goddesses joined along with men. The fortunes and misfortunes of men and women were determined by what Zeus and His Assembly of gods and goddess-

es decided. The Olympian Assembly sitting high above human actions gazed with concern or indifference at the progress of war, and directed its course according to their sweet will. This conception of the epic world of the Iliad is not tenable in a much sophisticated world of the Victorian age. Hardy has to reinterpret and readjust the tragic world to the modern set-up with the epic essence unaffected. The epic essence of the Iliad is the recognition of the existence of the Olympian Assembly as a supreme and superincumbent force presiding over human actions and directing the latter's course towards the inevitable doom. In the novels of Hardy, such as "The Return of the Native", "The Mayor of Casterbridge", "Tess of the D'Urbervilles", and "Jude the Obscure", the same tragic world is conceived. Here men and women are, no doubt, located round about Wessex with its rutted roads, clusters of villages, hills, moors and forests and are destined to fight for the pressing daily needs of life, but as months and years roll on bringing in their train the increasing miseries of life, they feel that there is force above them hostile to their happiness on earth. Yeobright and Eustacia in 'The Return of the Native' regret that they should have met on the Egdon Heath. Herchard in the 'Mayor of Casterbridge' understands,—"Some sinister intelligence bent on punishing him". When they meet the doom in

their lives, they feel the dark fatality. Here men and women are like puny creatures fuming and fretting against the stupendous background of the stellar universe, and are drawn inevitably towards the doom by a force above them. The tragic world in Hardy is dominated not by the Olympian Assembly, but by a blind and hostile Destiny, either in the form of the Egdon Heath or in the form of the Immanent Will. They are the modernised version of the Olympian Assembly. Instead of the gods and goddesses of Homer descending down to the earth to mix with men and women to protect them or lead them astray, Hardy has introduced in his novels chances and accidents which creep into human actions in fatal moments. It is the accidental presence of Wildeva in the room of Eustacia just on the same day when the mother of Yeobright is trudging a long way to the house of her son in order to be reconciled with him and his wife,—that brings upon both Yeobright and Eustacia the tragedy of separation for ever. Tess writes a letter confessing her guilt in the chase and slips it into the room of Angel Clare so that she can marry him in a clean heart, but it is the chance missing of that letter that brings about the separation just immediately after marriage. It is the casual and chance utterance of Henchard in the intoxicated moment that he can sell away his wife and daughter in lieu of a

few shillings,—that darkness and dooms his life even in the peak of glory. In Homer, sleep and madness descend to the earth as gods and goddesses and make men behave rashly. In the *Iliad*, Ajax is driven into madness by Athene, because he intends to kill Agamemnon and Menelaus, the favourite of Athene, who in order to protect them, sends madness to Ajax. In Hardy, sleep does not descend as a goddess, but as "Nature's second course" to a young girl, Tess, at night, while she has been driving the cart to the market, and carelessly causes a misfortune not only to her family but also to herself. Twice does she fall asleep, once in the cart and again in the forest of the chase, where Alec outrages her virginity. And the misfortunes in her life naturally follow. Hardy has naturalised and domesticated the tragic world because here instead of too much obtrusive interference from the Olympian heights, characters are left to themselves to weave their net of miseries by their own natural actions and temperments, and are caught in the web which they have woven, while Fate or Destiny remaining always in the back-ground.

To make this tragic world quite fitting for the epic canvas of his novels, Hardy has laid the scenes of his novels in the countrysides of Wessex far away from the maddening crowd of civilisation and sophistication. Here people are all rustic and are engaged in elementary occupations of sheep-shearing,

farming, ploughing, moving or milking in dairies. They have no modern complexities of life. Nor do they suffer from any psychological aberrations. They struggle for the dire needs of life, and seek happiness in married life. The elementary and primitive passions of love, jealousy, and envy etc. impel them to actions in life. Eustacia, a rebel child of the Egdon Heath, longs for happiness in life with a husband who will take her to Paris and give her opportunity for a life of luxury, amusement and gaiety. It is this longing which prompts her to tie herself with Yeobright. Henchard in the Mayor of Casterbridge is worried by poverty and is disgusted with his wife who burdens his life all the more. He takes liquor to forget the miseries of life. He fights against poverty, and when poverty is fought out, he fights within himself against the fatal weakness for liquor. Tess is driven to accept jobs on several occasions in order to fight against poverty. Her natural desire for happiness in married life draws her willy-nilly towards Angel Clare. Jude is a mason repairing old cathedrals and churches. The broad outlines of their lives have something of the savour of epic simplicity.

Hardy has not only cast the world of tragedy in the epic manner but has also dwelt on the theme of family curse in the manner of Aeschylus's Oresteian Trilogy. The study of the curse upon the House of Atreus as Aeschylus has

done in Orestea is also done by Hardy in "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" and "Jude the Obscure." It is not so elaborate in the "Jude the obscure" as it is in "Tess of the D'Urbervilles." The D'Urbervilles in their hey-day of prosperity assaulted the chastity of many village women. Crimes and sins committed by them centuries ago came as a curse upon an innocent descendant of their family. Tess suffers not so much for any fatal fault of her own as for the curse upon her family. She is innocent, but has to atone for the past follies of her ancestors. The same theme of heredity also occurs in "Jude the Obscure." Jude and Sue are cousins and belong to a family which has experienced unsuccessful marriages ending in separation and frustrations. Here Hardy is more occupied with the study of souls in conflict with the civilised institution of marriage than with the family curse. Emphasis has been shifted, because, as Evelyn Hardy's study of the critical biography of "Thomas Hardy" proves that the novelist was much concerned with the personal tragedy of division or separation with his wife at this time. In "The Mayor of Casterbridge", Hardy is not concerned with the curse upon a family, but with that upon an individual. Henchard sells away his wife and daughter and he dies with the knowledge that his wife and the daughter whom he has treated as his own, are actually Newson's. Here the curse does not pro-

long from generation to generation in the manner of the Orestean trilogy, but is confined to the life of Henchard who starts life from the dark abyss, rises to the peak of glory, and dies in the dark abyss. The cycle turns round and the curse he utters against his wife, recoils itself and comes upon him, and he re-marries her and dies a widower and childless. Hardy read the classical tragedians with all youthful avidity and such studies in the cases of Tess and Jude and Henchard show clearly the deep influence they left on him. Their lives are doomed no doubt for certain vulnerable weakness in their characters; but have they not to face a terrible and hostile force beyond them? Browning's fervent and trenchant declaration,—

"God's in Heaven

All's right with the world"

has been challenged by Hardy. This world is a "blighted star" according to Tess and here people suffer, because gods above sport with them. The tragic world of Hardy's novels has the same appeal as that of Shakespeare's King Lear,—

"As flies to wanton boys are we
to the gods

They kill us for their sport.

In such a world the justice of God cannot prevail. And Hardy's novels present a world not only far away from modern civilisation and sophistication, but also dominated by the pagan gods and goddesses, and replete with media-

eval superstitions. Hardy is a pagan, and in this respect also is along the line of Homer and the classical tragedians. The Christian doctrine with the virtues of mercy and forgiveness cannot hold good in the pagan world. In the "Return of the Native," Hardy's pagan leanings are clear and the superstitions of wax-idol being burnt and of red-hot iron thrust into the body of Eustacia to do away with the witch's malignant power, are grim and horrible tragedies only conceivable in the world of the Egdon Heath. The burning of the idol of Lucetta with horrible revelry in the "Mayor of Casterbridge" is a distorted continuation of the mediaeval superstitions in religion. The same pagan world lingers on even in the later work, "Jude the Obscure" where Sue's admiration of the idols of pagan gods and goddesses is marked. The same novel deals with the indictment upon the institution of marriage, as the Christian doctrine has established to kill the souls within. In "Tess of the D'Urbervilles", "the President of the Immortals has ended his sport with Tess." Thus in conceiving of the world of his novels, Hardy is a descendant of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Shakespeare of his own country.

The conception of a tragic hero or heroine is no less worth noticing. E. M. Forster in his "Aspects of the Novel" has complained that Hardy's characters are all puppets in the hands of Fate. Characters and their indivi-

dualities have been crippled to a great extent, because of the Destiny or Fate presiding over their actions. This is true only to a certain extent and only in certain cases. Hardy has read the tragedies in the lives of men and women not only from without but also from within. And in this respect, he has trodden the track of Shakespeare. From the practice of Shakespeare, we know that a tragedy must represent a hero or heroine in the exalted position of the society endowed with the nobility of character, or with certain noble qualities, so that his fall might arouse a sense of pity or waste. Hardy has not chosen his characters for the exalted position of the society. His characters are all austic and simple people of the lowly station. Mr. Yeobright is simply a merchant in liquor and Eustacia is a village woman with a certain standard of education. Henchard has been originally in the hay-trussing line, and later on becomes a businessman. Tess is a poor village girl, and Angel Clare is a student in the dairy. Jude is also a mason and Sue is a mistress in a school. They are all men and women of our day-to-day experience of life and occupy the station in the society as we do. And yet Hardy is able to strike the true tragic note in their fall, because he has sublimated these characters to a position from where their fall arouses a sense of pity and waste. The scene in 'The Return of the Native', where Yeobright accuses Eustacia of

treachery and unfaithfulness and of illicit connection with Wildeve is fraught with intense tragedy; on either side there is nothing of the taint of treachery and each is noble from his or her point of view, and yet Yeobright says,—“You have held my happiness in the hollow of your palm and like a devil dashed it down.” The subdued and controlled answers of Eustacia intensify all the more the tragic spirit of the scene. We cannot also blame Eustacia, because she is caught in the net of circumstances from which she cannot extricate herself. The sense of something noble and fine being bruised and smothered is the abiding effect of Hardy's world of tragedy upon the mind of the reader. The same is the effect of Henchard's fall. From a mere hay-trusser, he rises to the peak of prosperity and prestige by virtues of his self-control, perseverance, and persistent efforts, and yet with the return of his wife and Farfrae, he is steadily and gradually sinking down and down till he dies in a thatched room. And yet apart from his momentary fault and rashness, he is a noble creature destined to suffer in life. Hardy's heroes and heroines have an outstanding nobility which cannot stand against the odds and hazards which the external agent, Destiny, weaves for them. Hardy has also drawn his characters from within in the Shakespearean manner. In Yeobright's nature there is something of equilibrium, which, if

once disturbed for any reason, would make him an uncompromising and unreasonable being. This side of his character has been pointed out by Mrs. Yeobright to Eustacia,—“You, Eustacia, stand on the edge of a precipice without knowing it. Only show my son one-self the temper you have shown me today and.....you will find that though he is as gentle as a child with you now, he can be as hard as steel. “While, on the other hand, in Eustacia’s nature, there is something of massive passions which work by fits and starts and once she has taken any course of life, she will not retrace her steps. These vulnerable weaknesses of their characters are no less responsible for their tragedies than Destiny itself. Hardy has placed his characters in such external circumstances where their weaknesses get flared up all the more. Had Tess been in the circumstances of Eustacia, there would have been no tragedy of Tess, because she

would have been satisfied with her husband cutting furzes and humming to her ears sweet songs of love. Or, had Eustacia been in the company of Newson, the sailor in the Mayor of Casterbridge,” who buys the wife of Henchard, sailing across the ocean, landing on this or that country, there would have been no tragedy of Eustacia. Hardy has read the riddles of life,—the life that seeks something but gets just the opposite by the irony of Fate.

When the world of the Victorian age went mad with the material pursuits, Hardy took his stand on an opposite vantage ground and found the futility lurking behind them. His unique achievement lies in conceiving of the tragic world in the scope of novels after the manner of Homer, classical tragedians and Shakespeare, and thereby in widening the appeal of the novel as a form of art and in exalting it to the status of a modern epic.

MY REMINISCENCES OF HETAMPUR

Prof. L. Mukherjee, M. A.

I

College in a village ! Great was my surprise when I heard it from two young gentlemen who came from Hetampur to see me one fine morning. It was in September 1925 and I was then in Calcutta. They were then unknown to me and so I could not guess what brought them to my place. I felt a bit surprised and flattered when I came to learn that they were professors and their mission was to recruit me for the college at Hetampur. I had heard of Hetampur before but did not know what the place was like, a town or a village. Imagine my surprise when I was told that a seat of a first-grade college is a small village with a population numbering a little above 2000. That such a place came to have a college at a time when many of the big towns of Bengal (then undivided) had no facilities for higher education, appeared to be something unique. For a time, I hesitated as to what to say to the gentlemen but felt a bit assured when I was told of the bracing climate of the place and the cheap cost of living there. I agreed to their proposal and the visitors departed, one of them humorously remarking that I would find Hetampur an ideal place for plain

living and high thinking. By the way, let me say that my new visitors were Professor (now Doctor) Biman Bihari Majumdar and Professor Shibsaran Choudhuri. Biman Babu had then recently retired from the Hetampur College and I was to fill up the vacancy. He had found "fresh fields and pastures new" at Patna where he added laurels to laurels and eventually became Inspector of Colleges. Shib Babu, whose colleague I was to be, proved to be a valuable friend during the whole course of my long service at Hetampur. These two gentlemen occupy a large niche of my mind when I think of the bygone days of my life at Hetampur.

Some of my friends in Calcutta, when they came to know of my intended departure from their midst, sought to dissuade me. I told them that I had already committed myself and going back upon my word would be unseemly. "A village looks very nice in a picture and village life is a good theme for a poet. But things are not what these artists see through the painted glass of their imagination." This was their sullen remark cynically expressed. I was then in indifferent health and so the prospect of a change

to a place reputed to be healthy outweighed all other considerations.

It was in the first week of November, 1925, that I left Calcutta for Hetampur by a night train. I was to get down at Dubrajpur which I reached just at day-break. Outside the station gate I secured a hackney carriage and told the coachman to drive to the college hostel at Mansayar where I was to put up for some time. The carriage rattled off along a badly kept rutty road, bumping and jolting, sometimes perilously heeling and compelling me to steady myself with such balancing skill as I had. In about ten minutes I reached the town of Dubrajpur famous as one of the big marts of the district but abominably filthy and dirty. Dubrajpur passed, the road became broader, the air purer and myself steadier. In another ten minutes I reached my destination where Shibsaran Babu received me with a smiling face. He was then in charge of the hostel and he very kindly gave me a seat in his own room. After refreshing myself for a while I came out to have a look at the locality. There was nothing impressive about the hostel but it is beautifully situated. It stands on one of the main roads flanked on the east by a beautiful forest of Sal trees and on the west by a shady grove of mangoe trees and the Mansayar pond. On the south runs the main road through the Sal forests on both sides forming a picturesque vista which it will do one's

heart good to behold. The hostel looks like a sylvan **asram** of the good old days, calm and peaceful, presenting an agreeable contrast to the nerve-shattering conditions prevailing in big cities. I found the students of the hostel very obliging and helpful and the unsophisticated mode of their life accorded well with their peaceful surroundings. I stayed at the Mansayar hostel only for a short period and was very happy all the time, thanks to Shib Babu's geniality and the commendable conduct of the students of the hostel.

After a month's stay at the hostel I removed to Hetampur where I brought my family from Calcutta. A suitable house in a village cannot be had for the asking. The college authorities had indeed promised me one but the promise remained unredeemed for a time. So I had to be content for the time being with a miserable-looking cottage which had nothing to recommend it except its proximity to the college. To live in such a house was to me a novel experience and rather than being annoyed I felt somewhat amused. Instead of grumbling I began to work like a day labourer to remove some of the distressing inconveniences calculated to endanger my health and safety. My plain living and hard working evoked both sneer and praise and when the report of it reached the "Rajas" they were sympathetically stirred. Step by step the needed additions and alterations were made and

After some months of patient waiting my house underwent a respectable metamorphoses. Rome was not built in a day and so was my house at Hetampur.

While staying in the Mansayar hostel I had heard of another college hostel situated at a place called Giridanga. As yet I could not make time to go there. Shortly after coming to my new home at Hetampur I started one day for Giridanga. The road leading to it being long and circuitous—about three miles from my place—I took a short-cut route which halved the distance. It took me about forty minutes to reach the hostel where I was greeted by the smiling students and received very kindly by Professor Nikhil Narayan Prachanda who was then in charge of the hostel. A simple, unostentatious man of amiable disposition Nikhil Babu worked hard for the college and his hostel. Unfortunately he is no longer in the land of the living. A pedestrian journey to Giridanga is rather trying but one will be amply rewarded by the fascinating scenery around it. It is one of the beauty-spots of the locality. The hostel is picturesquely situated on an extensive plot of high ground from which one can have glimpses of the distant hills of Dumka and a refreshing panoramic view of the surroundings. Successive Inspectors of Colleges have spoken of it in glowing terms. I used to visit the place whenever I could make time and with health

gradually improving in the salubrious climate of Hetampur, the journey was no longer felt irksome.

On the southern outskirts of Hetampur lies an extensive stretch of rocky land known as "**Garer Math.**" A portion of it is utilised as a play ground where football matches were then usually held. To the north of this play ground there is a big crescent-shaped **bund** which, I was told, once extended upto Krishnanagar, a small village not far from Giridanga. The **bund** is known as Hafez Khan's bund. To the south of it stands the tiny memorial tomb of a Muslim lady, Sherina Bibi, whose memory is still cherished with reverence by the people of Hetampur. The **Garer Math** is an ideal place for walking and I used to resort to it frequently for enjoying its pure air. One day in the course of my morning walk I changed to pass by an old venerable-looking gentleman near Sherina Bibi's tomb. Finding me a new comer he accosted me very politely, seeking to know particulars about me. Soon we were deep on conversation and I asked him to tell me something about Sherina Bibi. Pointing to a near-by pond he narrated to me the current tradition about Sherina's tragic death. He also said many other things which aroused my curiosity to know something of the past history of Hetampur and its neighbourhood. I set about making enquiries here and there and eventually managed to secure a copy of the

"Birbhum Bibarani" compiled by the late Maharajkumar Mahimaniranjan Chakravarty. This book is a storehouse of information about Hetampur and some other places of interest in the district of Birbhum. It will not be out of place if here I make a short digression to tell something of an interesting chapter of the past history of Hetampur.

II

The chapter of the past history of Hetampur which I relate here takes us back to the days of **Bargir hangama**—the terrible raids of the Maratha freebooters who devastated the fair province of Bengal in the forties of the eighteenth century. In those days Rajnagar, now a small village near Suri, was the seat of Muslim power in the district of Birbhum. It was in charge of an officer called Fauzdar who was the Mughul counterpart of the modern District Magistrate and Collector. In the first quarter of the eighteenth century there occurred a serious disturbance at Raghobpur, now a small village on the southern bank of the Shal River, a small streamlet marking the southern boundary of Hetampur. The leader of this disturbance or rather revolt was one Raghobananda Roy who was goaded to it by the oppression of the local Muslim tax-collector. The revolt soon assumed alarming proportion and so the then Fauzdar of Rajnagar sent an able officer named Hatem Khan to put it down. Hatem pitched his camp

on an extensive plain now known as the "Gazer Math" of Hetampur. Willy diplomat as Hatem was, he soon trapped Raghobananda and the rebels, thus deprived of their leader, were soon brought to submission. Hatem then built a small fort on the site to prevent troubles in the future and fixed his residence there. The gratified Fauzdar honoured him by naming the place "Hatampur" after him. In course of time Hatampur came to be known as Hetampur. Thus was founded the village which this year has the proud privilege of celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of its college. On Hatem's death one Hafez Khan, reputed to be the son of a noble of the Court of Delhi, was appointed by the Fauzdar of Rajnagar to take Charge of Hetampur.

The appearance of Hafez Khan opened a new chapter in the history of Hetampur. The career of his wife, Shernia Bibi, is invested with a halo of romance and conjugal devotion which has made her name a household word at Hetampur. Tradition has it that Sherina Bibi was the daughter of Emperor Muhammad Shah of Delhi. She and Hafez Khan were brought up together in the royal harem and they were very fond of each other. As they grew up, their intimacy developed into love and so strong was their mutual attachment that they believed in all sincerity that Providence had marked them out for each other. To this dotting pair fondly dreaming of their

happy union in future the Emperor's announcement that he would give Sherina in marriage to one of his nephews named Hussain, came like a bolt from the blue. Grievous was the news and both Hafez and Sherina were grievously touched at the most tender point of their hearts. Driven to desperation by the intensity of their sorrow they took the bold step of fleeing from Delhi and became for a time *homeless* wanderers. Eventually they straggled into Hetampur where they found a heaven of refuge. Hafez took service under Hatem Khan and soon gave a good account of himself. The report of his ability reached the ears of the Fauzdar of Rajnagar who, on Hatem's death, gave him the charge of the fort at Hetampur. Fairly established in life, Hafez for a time lived in peace in the company of his beloved Sherina.

But dark times were ahead. The Mughul Empire was tottering to its fall. The intrepid Marathas were coming to the front, throwing out a challenge to the weak and dissolute rulers of Delhi. The great Maratha Chief Raghuji Bhonsle who had already terrorised and devastated the Carnatic, swooped down upon Bengal in irresistible numbers and carried fire and sword everywhere. Bengal wailed white and her people suffered unspeakable miseries. Birbhum in those days was a gateway to Bengal and so had to bear the brunt of the Maratha

attack. The Marathas pitched their camp near Suri at a place now known as Kendua wherefrom they sallied out looting and plundering the neighbouring districts. Hafez Khan of Hetampur strengthened the defences of his fort and set up an arsenal at Krishnanagar which he fortified with ditches and ramparts. He constructed a big *bund* or waterway linking Hetampur with Krishnanagar. This beautiful bund, though now largely silted up, still exists and bears his name. Traces of ditches and ramparts are still to be found at Krishnanagar.

While Hafez was adding to the fortifications of Hetampur, Hussain, his rival in love, busied himself with plans for the recovery of Sherina. He was greatly piqued by Sherina's escape and began a ceaseless search to secure her. At last he came to Suri and put up at Kendua near the camp of the Marathas. There he came to learn of Sherina's whereabouts and made up his mind to secure her at any cost. Realising that Hafez Khan was no mean enemy he enlisted the support of the Marathas. Kendua was full of rich rewards and prospects of immense booty to be had by a surprise attack upon Hafez Khan's fort at Hetampur. Looting was the favourite pastime of the Marathas and so they eagerly responded to Hussain's call. One dark night they stealthily marched out from Kendua along with Hussain and moved towards Hetampur. Hafez

Khan who had already got some information of the brewing storm, was well prepared to meet the enemy. As a consequence, instead of a surprise attack there followed a fierce fight. Hafez offered a gallant resistance and was very near success when he was ambushed and stabbed to death by Hussain. His death disheartened his soldiers who began to flee away pell-mell. At this crisis Sherina Bibi rose to the height of the occasion. She took a horse and rushing out sword in hand, rallied the soldiers and compelled the enemy to retire. But the worst had already happened. She began to weep bitterly over the body of her husband and with a heavy heart arranged his burial. She then returned to the seclusion of the fort with a heart broken beyond repair.

Great was Hussain's disappointment at the failure of his enterprise. He, however, would not give up his hope. On the contrary he felt encouraged by the delusive thought that the death of Hafez had removed the great obstacle which stood between him and Sherina. He sent a speedy messenger to Delhi informing Muhammad Shah of Sherina's whereabouts. The Emperor who was deeply offended at what he considered to be his daughter's unfilial conduct, issued a peremptory order to the Fauzdar of Rajnagar to recover Sherina and send her back to Delhi. Thereupon the Fauzdar took the Hetampur fort by a surprise night attack. Sherina

was roused from her sleep by the yelling cry of the soldiers who had already breached the fort and were well within it. Hussain who was with them, rushed towards Sherina's apartment and tried to seize her. Finding no means of escape the heroic lady cast a look of withering scorn at Hussain and jumped out from the window of her apartment into the pond below. Thus was sacrificed at the altar of love a noble lady whose heroism and single-minded devotion have become a tradition which still points a moral and adorns a tale. Her little tomb on the bank of the pond into which she took her fatal plunge has become a place of pilgrimage to the local muslims. Even to this day they devotedly put there a burning lamp every evening.

III

Hetampur has in its neighbourhood many places of interest. I visited some of them with pleasure and profit. Even now when I am far away from them they flash across my mind, blazing a trail of sweet recollections. Kendubilla, popularly known as Joydeva Kenduli, is one of those places. Here in the time of King Lakshman Sen of Bengal was born the saintly poet whose mellifluous lyrical poem, the Gita-Govinda, has immortalised his name. Kendubilla is about seven miles from Hetampur. It stands on the bank of the Ajoy river and is an important place of pilgrimage for the

Vaishnava sect. Every year a **mela** (fair) is held here, which begins from the last day of the month of **Pous** and lasts for four days. The fair is one of the biggest of its kind and attracts people from far and near. It is sight to see continuous streams of pilgrims and shop-keepers plodding their way to attend the **mela**. Thousands of people bathe in the Ajoy which on the occasion of this festival is popularly believed to be invested with the sanctity of the Ganges for three days by a miraculous junction with that sacred river. The days of miracles are not over, science notwithstanding. Another place which greatly fascinated me is Bakreswar, a famous **Saiva** shrine. It is about nine miles from Hetampur. The place owes its name to the great sage **Asta-bakra** of **Pauranic** fame who attained success here in his quest for spiritual enlightenment. It has an atmosphere of solemn serenity which is at once refreshing and impressive. The most noteworthy feature of the place is a group of eight hot springs the like of which is not to be found anywhere in India. They are constantly bubbling with hot water emitting sulphurous vapour. The temperature of the springs is not uniform. It varies from spring to spring, and that of one exceeds the boiling point. But the most astonishing thing that strikes a visitor is the existence of a spring of cold water very close to the hot ones. This phenomenon has not yet been accounted for

although many scientists are reported to have visited the place.

Among other sights which I enjoyed during my stay at Hetampur were the ruins of some of the ancient places of historical interest. Of these the ruins of **Shyamarupa-garh** interested me most. The place is near Kendubillwa and lies at a distance of about ten miles from Hetampur. I was very eager to see the place and looked for a suitable opportunity. But its situation, in an out-of-the-way corner in the midst of a forest infested by wild animals, involves a journey very irksome and more or less risky. Fortunately I got a chance to visit the place under better conditions. My friend and neighbour, S. J. Haripada Ghosh Hazra who unfortunately is no longer in our midst, one day asked me to share with him a journey to a place called Bishnupur very near to **Shyamarupa-garh**. He was then the Law officer of the Hetampur Raj and his duty required his presence there. As it was summer vacation I readily accepted his proposal and prevailed upon principal B. C. Sen Gupta to join us. We three formed a merry party and started on the appointed day early in the morning. It was about ten in the morning when we reached Joydeva Kenduli where we greatly enjoyed the picturesque view of the Ajoy river. It was then mostly dry. Its sandy bed glistening in the sun was interspersed with shallow streams of shimmering water. Our carriage stopped near the bank

of the river and the two horses began to foam, having had to carry their load along a road deeply trenched and furrowed. The river bed, 'sandy' and yielding, is unfit to be traversed by any sort of wheeled vehicle other than the despised bullock-cart. So we left the carriage behind and crossed the Ajoy on foot. As no conveyance was available on this side of the river we had to proceed leisurely on foot. Haripada Babu gradually accelerated his speed and Bhupendra Babu followed suit. I lagged behind as with my damaged knee-joints I could not keep pace with them. Bhupendra Babu, although sedentary in habit, proved a good pedestrian while Haripada Babu, the heaviest of the party, excelled us all. We perspired heavily in the heat of the burning sun and an hour's time which brought us to our destination, seemed almost an age. After resting a while we had cold bath and hot meals and then fell soundly asleep. We got up at about 3 P.M. and started for Shyamarupagarh. We proceeded along a zig-zag track through a forest full of thorns and brambles and eventually reached the foot of a small hill crowned with the temple of Goddess Shyamarupa. It is said to have been erected by one Ichai Ghosh who according to traditional account headed a successful revolt against a local ruler named Karna Sen and signalled his triumph by erecting a tower of victory known to this day as Ichai Ghosh's Deul. He was,

however, subsequently defeated and killed by Law Sen said to be a descendant of Karna Sen. These events are usually referred to the ninth century A.D. We noticed existing ruins of buildings and walls, traces of ramparts, silted-up ditches and tanks, all pointing to the antiquity of the locality and bearing silent witness to a forgotten chapter of the early history of Bengal. We could not linger longer as the shades of evening were already upon us and so hastened towards Ichai Ghosh's Deul. It was almost dark when we got near it. The lofty tower rising to a dizzy height looked very solemn and impressive in the haze of twilight and for a time we were lost in the admiration of its solitary grandeur. But we were rudely awakened by flashes of lightning followed by a tremendous thunderclap. We hurried towards Bishnupur, taking a long circuitous route, the short route through the forest by which we had come being dangerously unsafe at night. Before long we were overtaken by torrential showers of rain. Just imagine our plight. In the pitch darkness of the night we had to thread our way very cautiously along a road rendered perilously slippery by rain which continued to batter us for more than an hour. Completely drenched and mud-splattered we managed to return to our destination. Changing our dress we began to talk over cups of tea about our recent experiences. A local gentleman who heard our conversation

remarked that it was providential that we escaped snake-bite near the Deul, a place notorious as the habitat of cobras. His words sent a thrill into my body. We had adventures indeed and perhaps with vengeance.

Let me now switch back to Hetampur. It was here that I had my first experience of village life. I was indeed accustomed to some of the amenities of the town life but the change to a rural atmosphere did not appear to me as something to be regretted. Perhaps it was so because I had a partiality for the village, or perhaps because I found Hetampur enjoying advantages which, not to speak of villages, many big towns had to go out. A first-grade college, a High school, a Sanskrit Tol, a charitable dispensary, all these were exceptional in a village in those days. Even now few villages have the benefit of these institutions. At a time when the neighboring town of Dubrajpur (at least ten times larger in area and population than Hetampur) had no High school and Suri, the administrative head-quarters of Birbhum, was without any college, the small village of Hetampur had the credit of having both. The High school of Hetampur was established in 1869 and its college in 1897. It was as late as the thirties of the present century that Dhubrajpur came to have a High school. It was the gift of a Marwari gentleman. Suri had to wait for another decade for a college, an accidental by-product

of the Japanese bomb. It reflects no small credit upon the Hetampur Raj that it established educational institutions at a time when the doors of education were not so wide as now. In respect of medical aid I found Hetampur enjoying enviable facilities. There were provisions for treatment according to different systems—Allopathy, Homoeopathy and Kaviraji. The Allopathic Charitable Dispensary was then in charge of S. J. Murari Mohan Sarkar B.Sc. M. B., a cool-headed and competent physician. To his professional skill he added a generous heart which made him highly popular. Kaviraj Sarat Chandra Gupta was a sound Physician, a Sanskrit scholar and a devout Vaishnava. Besides his duties at the Raj Kaviraji dispensary he had to manage the Sanskrit Tol and in both capacities he showed himself to the best advantage. Dr. U.K. Dass represented Homoeopathy. He was a genial companion and we greatly appreciated his amusing talks, specially those relating to the miracles of Homoeopathy. Thus when I went to Hetampur I found that it had removed to a large extent two of the cry grievances of the village—absence of educational facilities and lack of medical aid.

Life in a village is usually dull and drab as it lacks many of the exciting amenities which make city life more enjoyable. But thanks to the late Maharaja Ram Ranjan Chakravarty, the placid stream of life at Hetampur

was stirred into agreeable ripples on certain definite occasions. He had made ample provisions for the celebration of religious festivals which greatly relieved the monotony of life at Hetampur. Of these the most spectacular was the **Saraswati Puja**. The attendant festival lasted for four days during which Hetampur became the Mecca of the whole district. The village put on a colourful appearance and was thronged by thousands of people including the district authorities. There were arrangements for various kinds of entertainments graded to suit the taste of different sections of the people. Exhibitions, both industrial and agricultural, a fairly big **mela** or fair, cattle show, theatre and **Jatra** parties, sports which included horse race, elephant race and cart race, splendid fire works—all these and many more supplied thrills and attractions which for the time made the people delirious with joy. It was quite fitting that Hetampur then enjoying the proud position of being the only centre of higher education in the district, should attach great importance to the worship of the Goddess of learning.

Besides the periodical celebration of festivals, Hetampur at times enjoyed shows more thrilling and entertaining. This was largely due to the enlightened patronage of late Kumar Biswaranjan Chakravarty. Unfortunately for Hetampur, this cultured gentleman of great promise was cut off in the prime of his

life. He had the happy knack of investing everything, he undertook with agreeable touches of novelty. He conceived grandly and executed thoroughly. Who could imagine that the far-famed Corinthian Islington team could be prevailed upon to play an exhibition game of foot-ball at a place so small as Hetampur? Kumar Biswaranjan did the miracle in 1937 and the people of Birbhum and neighbouring districts came in thousands to witness an exciting game. Acting upon the suggestion of the local Headmaster of the High school, S. J. Niradendu Sanyal, Biswaranjan invited the session of the A. B. T. A. to Hetampur in 1939. The magnificent arrangements he made for the reception of the teachers and the variety of delightful entertainments he supplied on the occasion are still fresh in my mind. His untimely death deprived Hetampur of a fine chance of all-round improvement.

As I think of Hetampur, bubbles of reminiscences force themselves upon the surface of my mind in multi-coloured hues. I now fix upon one of them and say something of a few experiences associated with the college which I served for about twentyseven years. I must however be very brief as I feel sure that the present occasion which has prompted me to wield a trembling pen has requisitioned much stronger hands to give a fuller account of the college. When I joined the college I discovered that the duties assigned to

me were rather heavy. I was to be the sole monarch of the department I would have to survey and was left to rule or misrule with none else to share the responsibility. I, however, did not grumble and set to work with the zeal of a new recruit, always anxious not to fall below the mark. I plodded on for a few years and eventually had the supreme satisfaction of the teacher when a student of my department stood first in History in the University examination. My life in the college was on the whole agreeable. In principal B. C. Sen Gupta I found an accommodating Chief while my colleagues were all very friendly and sympathetic. In particular, Professor Sarat Chandra Sen who unfortunately is no longer with us, greatly impressed me by his amiable manners, obliging disposition and above all by his child-like simplicity. The roll strength of the college was much below what a first-grade college should have, but the paucity of number was not without compensating advantages. It made possible that personal contact between teachers and students, the absence of which is without doubt an undesirable feature of most of the overcrowded colleges now-a-days. We freely mixed with the students, taking part in their games and in the feasts which they arranged on many an occasion. At first I found the students not very keen on sports but with the arrival of a few sportsman students their sporting spirit

was stimulated so that within a short time the foot-ball team of the college became one of the best in the district. Kumar Biswaranjan noticed it with satisfaction and gave a further stimulus by organising a shield tournament on a magnificent scale. For a time Hetampur became an important centre of sporting activity. At times the college professors were called upon to do bits of social service. In 1935 the district of Birbhum was threatened with an awful shortage of food. The Government called it scarcity although famine conditions prevailed in the villages. Mr. B.K. Guha, I.C.S. who was then the District and Sessions Judge of Birbhum, was moved by the appalling distress of the people. He made an excellent non-official organisation and set up committees of local men to tackle the situation. He set an inspiring example by moving from door to door to collect rice and the subscriptions. At his instance our college staff headed by our worthy principal followed his example and the students of our college gladly co-operated with us.

Our college had its dark days. The number of students, never very large, began to grow thinner and thinner with the establishment of colleges in the neighbourhood. The death of Kumar Biswaranjan was followed by serious complications in the affairs of the Hatampur Raj, which threatened the financial stability of the college. His son Rebatiranjan was then a mere boy

while Suranjan representing the direct line of the late Maharaja was then a lisping child. The situation presented a splendid opportunity to sharks and sharpers whose spoliation impoverished the Trust Estate and threatened with ruin all the institutions dependent upon it for financial aid. Amidst this surrounding gloom, flickered a fitful ray of hope. Maharajkumari Jyotsnamoyee, a highly intelligent lady of broad views, unfortunately widowed in the prime of her life, was roused to a sense of responsibility by the report of the prevailing confusion. She was anxious to safeguard the interests of her only son Suranjan and

to maintain the prestige of the Hetampur Raj by preserving all the benevolent institutions. It was largely owing to her efforts that the college became a Government-sponsored one. Thus after weathering many a storm our college has found a safe refuge and it gives me great pleasure to learn that it is going to celebrate its Diamond Jubilee. New wine has been poured into the old bottle. It is my fervent hope that under new auspices the college will continue its career of usefulness with renewed vigour and develop into a model institution of its kind.

A HISTORICAL SYNTHESIS IN EARLY MEDIEVAL INDIA

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The title of our essay is an impossible one, but it is next to impossible to justify it within the brief compass here available. Our difficulties are more than one. Firstly, secondly and thirdly they are about the scope and limitation of the subject ; about treatment and methodology and about controversial problems derived from different sources. Therefore we must be humble in our approach. We must not assume a very ambitious scheme.

The scope and limitation of our subject is obvious. One difficulty in intellectual interpretation of history arises out of the study of different facts. There is no denying that facts must be viewed objectively. Pollard observes of them : "They are useful and necessary solely as means of determining sequences, and without the careful observance of sequences we cannot arrive at causes."¹ A factual study has got a special difficulty for Indian history. India is a land of varieties. Consequently, her problems are not confined to political aspect only. They are social, economic and constitutional ; religious ethnological and cultural. It is rather difficult to find a

common way of approach to so many problems. A mere statement of facts will furnish no perspective. What is required is a systematic understanding of the significance of different facts under a broad generalisation. Our approach is to that objective line.

Then again, one of the controversies among historians is about methodology. It becomes difficult for one to use materials for any correct generalisation. H. A. L. Fisher thinks, "I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave, only one great fact with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalisations, only one safe rule for the historian : that he should recognize in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen."² The problem lies in a deeper point. In our days of extreme specialisation it is difficult to form any general opinion. A careful selection of facts is, therefore, required to arrive at a comprehensive conclusion. The only alternative is to be bewildered in finding the will-o-the-wisp of History. The spirit of historical development is lost in day catalogue of facts. The

1. Factors in Modern History, 3rd edition. London 1932.
2. A History of Europe : P. V.

tragedy of the Cambridge Historical series is a clear proof on the point. The personal tragedy of Lord Acton in writing a history of Liberty, a privilege which was denied to him by Providence, is a too clear proof to remember and to think over the matter. One school of opinion holds that history must be based upon facts "from the bottom up" i. e., through the use of local materials and a local focus.³ This method enriches us with a treasure of priceless informations but does not enlighten in providing a philosophy. Therefore our approach to the subject matter has always been an intellectual interpretation of facts but always as they are.

But the gravest difficulty lies in controversial problems derived from different sources. In thinking over it we must remember that the history of a people lies in their social, economic and mental evolution through ages. We can not understand the significance of one institution or nation or idea casting shadow upon another if we do not view it from social or literary or cultural points of view. Unfortunately when we study the history of India we try to localise our subject from one point or another. This leads to unnecessary and still more harmful bias which not only causes our tragic failure

but also leaves a callous caricature of our exhausted scholarship.

Be that as it may,—we will speak of our subject matter from no bias, sentimental or preconceived motive. We will try to show that in early medieval India i. e., from the Arabic invasion to the whole Turko-Afghan period,⁴ two confronting civilisations met together, crossed their swords but ultimately embraced each other with warm excitement of life. This period is regarded by the specialists as one of the most important periods of Indian history. It requires an objective study of different ideas and institutions, problems and perspectives of different peoples acting and reacting upon one another in the same period of time. It further requires a study of social development, of archaeological and anthropological investigations, of local customs, religious taboos and literary records available from every side, Indian and non-Indian. This period of Indian history is as confusing as the Middle Ages of Europe. It begins when the immemorial systems, rules and customs of ancient India were invaded, subdued and modified by a succession of foreign conquerors. They imposed a new rule, a different experiment in autocratic government, an exotic creed and strange languages. It

3. The cultural Approach to History : Edited by C. F. Ware.

4. The period is an ambiguous one, But for our convenience we have conceived the period from the Arabic invasion to the end of the Turko-Afghan period.

was for India a critical space of life when one idea and a categorically different civilisation got the scope of influencing her. At first it seemed that ideas armed with proselytising motive tried to eject black soot of distrust and hate. But that ugly teeth of barbaric mentality was changed into smiling face of co-ordination. It made one English historian profoundly struck with wonder. Sir John Marshall remarks: ".....seldom in the history of mankind has the spectacle developed, yet so radically dissimilar as the Muhammadan and Hindu meeting and mingling together. The very contrasts which existed between them, the wide divergences in their culture and their religions, make the history of their impact peculiarly instructive." But for us the task is not so elaborate and ambitious. We will select small and typical instances to generalise our opinion. In this aspect we have followed the way curved out by Professor G. M. Travelyan who says: "The generalisations must necessarily be based on a small number of particular instances, which are assumed to be typical, but which can not be the whole of the complicated truth."⁵ Our assumptions are broad observations and opinions may differ about them.

Upon such a background we can proceed to show that in India evolution is always continuous and

there was no violent change in transformation from ancient to medieval period. That is why Sri Jawaharlal Nehru rightly opines that it is a grave mistake to describe the Muslim invasion as the Musalman age for Islam had contact with India much before they attacked her.⁶ In India development of society followed a deeply imperceptible evolution. It was due to the fact that India is, as a whole, an outlook on life. As in the physical body different blood circulations purify the main channel of life or in the geographical world different tributaries make the river more vigorous and full of life so in India from time immemorial different tribes, races and nations, ideas institutions and civilisations acted and reacted upon the main land only to make her more forceful, vigorous and united. A pet theory of English writers arising out of political motive of divide et empera was to prove that the Muslims were always bastile in Hindu atmosphere. Stanley Lampoole observes: India "...never really assimilated the foreigners or their ideas. Despite the efforts of a few wide-seeing men like Akbar no true or permanent union expect occasionally among the officials and ruling classes, ever took place between the Muslims and the Hindus; and the ascendent races, whether Turks, Persians, Afghans or Mughals remained essentially an army

5. English social History (London, 1948) Introduction.

6. Discovery India (Bengali) p. 262.

of occupation, among a hostile or at least repellent population.⁷ That such condition really existed in the beginning is no one going to deny. But it is never true that it was the permanent picture of the society. The Muslim invasion was a new shock, a new challenge not only to India but to the whole of the then world. But it never weakened India, on the contrary, it strengthened her and put her on a better footing. It demolished the static complacency of life and stopped a thorough decadence of the society. The same picture is found in the history of China where the Tartar-Mongol invasions changed the Chinese impotency into a new vigour a little late or about this time.

Before we try to see how Islamic invasion was absorbed in India only to be united with new development, let us try to see the state of Indian Society in its important affairs.

India, on the eve of Muslim contact, was politically scattered, socially degenerated and ideologically most reactionary. For centuries together the political fabric of India was confined within her own geographical limitations. The days of Hindu empires were gone. The martial spirit of the Guptas was not existing. The foreign inroads in the post Gupta period created many revolutionary problems. After Harshavardhana Northern India became the battle ground of ambitious

kings and generals. The Gurjara-Pratiharas, the Palas and the Rastrakutas clashed against one another for political overlordship in North India. About this time the Arabs were trying to glimpse over the unexhausted treasury of India. But they were stopped by the Pratihara king Nagappata, and, for nearly three centuries India was free from the threat of external aggression.

But complete seclusion from international current of thought is one of the factors of degeneration. Isolation retards progress, intercourse quickens it. So when towards the first quarter of the Tenth century the colossal fabric of the mighty Pratiharas was facing a speedy smash "the process of disintegration presents a historic parallel to that which over took the Mughal empire in the eighteenth century."⁸ The greatest significance of the Pratihara downfall was the beginning of the end of antique India. Indian society and culture began to assume medieval characteristics.

In India there existed a powerful priesthood hostile to any form of change, social or political. They had a religious influence over Government. Indian social laws were directly derived from the religious institutions controlled by these priests. Hindu ritualism or rigid class system had an ugly effect upon the social structure of the time. There was a thorough

7. Medieval India under Muhammadan Rule : p. VI.

8. R. C. Majumder : Ancient India (1952) p. 306.

political immorality and worst type of distrust there. Therefore "The divisions of the Hindus were in their (Muslim's) favour : the downfall of one raja only removed a rival from the prince who was next behind."⁹

Another direct effect of this political isolation was a boastful over confidence which had developed among the Hindus. This narrow parochial vanity has been clearly observed by Alberuni, the great scholar. He says, "*We can only say, folly is an illness for which there is no medicine, and the Hindu believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs no science like theirs. They are haughty, foolishly vain, self-conceited and stolid. They are by nature niggardly in communicating that which they know and they take the greatest possible care to withhold it from men of another caste among their own people, still much more, of course, from any foreigner.*"¹⁰ Alberuni further says that ancient Hindu mind was not so bias, for he quotes Varahamihira who said to honour the Greeks. "The Greeks, though impure, must be honoured, since they were trained in Sciences and therein excelled others."¹¹

The moral tone of Indian society was at its worst. Though it is true that Alberuni speaks of the manners and customs of the Hindus as based upon the Principles of virtue and abstinence from wickedness¹² it is difficult to agree with him. One reference, of course, we must take care to note. The early Arab geographers, notably Al Idrisi praised whole heartedly the character of the Indians. He says : "The Indians are naturally inclined to justice and never depart from it in their actions. Their good faith, honesty and fidelity to their engagements are well known, and they are so famous for these qualities that people flock to their country from every side, hence their country is flourishing and their condition prosperous."¹³ But no one can deny the fact that from a few centuries back there was going on a religious rivalry between orthodox Hinduism and Buddhism. The religious evolution of Buddhism took side in Tantric activities and other abnormal religious behaviours. The religious institutions were full of corruptions. The degenerated Buddhists used to live married lives and to engage themselves in all sorts of secular

9. M. Elphinstone : The History of India (1889) p. 313.
10. E. Sachan : Alberuni's India (1914) Vol. I : p p. 22-23.
11. Ibid p. 23.
12. Ibid. Vol. II p. 161.
13. Nuzhatu-l Mushtak : Elliot and Dowson's History of India. As told by its own Historians : Vol. I. p. 88.

observations.¹⁴ Also N. N. Vasu has tried to show that the Vajrajana sect of the Buddhists in Bengal and Eastern India allowed and recognised these married Buddhists.¹⁵ The perversion of society is clearly seen in contemporary literature. In Krishna Misra's *Prabodha chandradaya* we find a thoroughly pornographic picture of the society. The same picture is derived from the sensuous description of debaucheries or fruitless play of words and puzzles from the writings of eminent men of the time. Religious antagonism led to such narrow outlook and obnoxious rigidity which would have surprised Manu and Yajnavalkya. The moral discipline was loose everywhere. The Hindu Sudras and the Buddhists "...viewed with no great sorrow the disaster that befell the Brahminical dynasties."¹⁶

These religious corruptions degenerated social morality; prostitutions became an institution. And that it had a religious sanction is proved by the notorious Devadasi system which was widely prevalent in all sacred places of India. That gross sensuality pervaded every sphere of Indian outlook is proved in the peoples' creative tastes and ha-

bits. In the early medieval India we find not a single philosophical speculation of a good intellectual standard. K. M. Panikkar observes "...in the 9th and 10th centuries, Hindu temples architecture in North India is overloaded with sculptures the beauty of which should not obscure the sensuality and often the obscenity of the themes portrayed. The Khujarao and Orissa temples for all their magnificence testify to a degeneration of the Hindu mind, which sought to find in *vat-syayana* the themes for their artistic expression."¹⁷

Similarly literature of the period gives a detailed account of the perversity of the Hindu mind. Poetry and Drama did not reach the level of the Gupta writers. The idea of scientific inquiry was not so keen as before. Though we come across the names of Bhoja of Dhara, Shomesvara Third of Kalayana and poet Kshemendra of Kashmir who showed their interests in diverse subjects we find no master mind at that time. In the biographies of the Kings like *Harshacharita* of Bana, *Ramcharita* of Sandhyakar and *Vikramanka Charita* of Bilhana we find mere exaggerated panegyrics.

14. V. Smith : *Early History of India* (Third Edition) p. 367

15. *Modern Buddhism and its followers in Orissa* Calcutta, 1911.

16. A. B. M. Hrbibullah : *Foundation of Muslim Rule in India* p. 313.

17. Presidential Address : Eighteenth session of the Indian History Congress : Calcutta : 1955 p. 9.

There were poets, dramatists and educationists who did not hesitate to write of stories of corrupted lives.¹⁸

Such was the state of affairs in India when grave dangers were knocking at her gate. And she immersed in fruitless philosophy and bent upon a separatist policy was sure to fall an easy prey to foreign invaders however high the character of her people and however deep their scholarship.¹⁹ Islamic conquest of India was in the logic of History. And against this background it is necessary to judge the potentiality of Islamic invasion. That will create a better judgement as to how the Islamic invasion resulted in a great historical synthesis in Indian history.

Stanley Lane-poole describes the Arab invasion of India as "an episode in the history of India and of Islam, a triumph without result"²⁰ But a deeper study in the subject throws light to the point that it began a period of slow but sure understanding of two different peoples. The Arabs channelised the scholarship of India—Religious, Philosophical, Mathematical, Medical, Astronomical etc—to foreign lands. Even perhaps the Greeks did not carry out oriental ideas to other parts of the world so

vigorously. That is why according to R. C. Majumdar this Arabic invasion "may be regarded as the most important episode in the history of India since the Aryan invasion as it has radically changed the entire aspect of Indian history such as no other event has yet done or is likely to do in the future."²¹ So let us try to see briefly the Islamic impact upon Indian history and its very important synthesis.

Islamic invasion in India was not an unmixed evil. It established a political unity in place of the system of hostile states. A thorough centralisation of administration was the first experiment that was carried out by the early Muslim rulers. The Hindu mind, generally full of potentiality, quickly adopted to the Muslim rule. It "kept up its uninterrupted flow as is shown by the many intellectual and religious movements which were organised by men who were great in the realm of thought and action."²² The significance of this co-relation of these two peoples is derived from the administrative leniency of the conquerors upon the vanquished. Muslim chroniclers and geographers emphatically maintain that the Hindus were left to rule in their own way. Thus one of them writes: "As he (Muhammad

18. K. M. Panikkar : A survey of Indian history pp. 131-134.

19. Iswari Prasad : History of Medieval India (1945) Introduction.

20. Medieval India under Muhammadan Rule.

21. Arab Invasion of India. P. I

22. R. K. Mukherjee : Local Government in Ancient India : p. 12.

ibn-Kasim) had entire confidence in their (Hindus) honesty and virtue, he had entrusted them with these offices, and all this affairs of the country would be placed under their charge."²³ One thing to note is that this toleration was much more diplomatic rather than humanitarian. Even collection of taxes was left to the Hindus.²⁴ Yet this sagacious step proved beneficial to both the peoples. Bureaucracy was highly developed in early medieval India. The Muslims realised that without Hindu help it would be difficult for them to rule in an alien land. Therefore the concurrence of the Hindu and Muslims systems was basically a historical necessity.²⁵

The Muslims state was a theocracy. Its real head was God and Kings were His vice-regents to carry out His Will. But in a land of infidels it would not be possible to follow a pure Islamic rule. That is why theocracy was interpreted to suit their ends by intelligent Muslim rulers, like Allauddin Khalji and Muhammad Ibn Tughlaq.²⁶ Alauddin even despised the rule of the Mullas and forwarded a scheme of a

new religion.²⁷ Is not the scheme, however fantastic it might appear, an eloquent testimony to harmonise these two religious elements?

Fanatics and begottered rulers were not rare among the Muslims. It is true that Sultan Mahmud was one of the cruelest blood thirsty monsters who directed his zeal to devastate infidel temples and plunder infidel wealth. But it is not true that he left the Muslims unmolested. On the contrary Muslim historians testify that he plundered Muslim wealth too.²⁸ Plundering was not a part of his religious fanaticism, it was his inborn lust.

Again, it is but natural that when two different nations and civilisations were meeting at a point some clash would take place. But soon the picture is changed and fierceness and cruelty of the early Afghan invaders and the slave kings are toned down and the Muslim kings are as much Indians as the Hindus.²⁹ It became more prominent after two or three generations when inter-religious marriages were frequent. The new Muslims born in India and having both Hindu and Muslim blood, began to think not in terms of Arabia

23. Chach-nama : Elliot. History of India : Vol. I p. 183.

24. Elliot : History of India Vol. I : Appendix III pp. 468-469.

25. W. H. Moveland : The Agrarian system of Muslim India p. 20.

26. Samir Kumar Gangopadhaya : Acts Madhyayugar Bharratbarse Sanskrit Samange Anusar : Paus-Magh (1361) pp. 130-131

27. Ziauddin Banani-Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi

28. Mirkhond : Ranzatu—Safa : Elliot. Vol. IV p. 136.

29. J. L. Nehru : Glimpses of World History (4th edition 1949) p. 250.

or Turkey or Bagdad but in terms of India, Delhi and Agra. If we just turn our attention to the ancient Hindu colonisation in Subarnadipa etc. We find the same feeling of sympathy among the Hindu and the peoples of the East Indian islands.

Sometimes a Muslim state employed Hindu troops and a Hindu state Muslim troops. Works were distributed not in terms of religion but in terms of efficiency. Even so fanatic a king like Sultan Mahmud employed Tilok, a Hindu barbar in the post of great responsibility. And Muslim historian like Ul Uthi and Baibaki have praised him much.³⁰ Such example can be multiplied to any extent.³¹ There official appointments might have been due more to political necessity than to any feeling of good will. But there can be no doubt that they facilitated the growth of amity between the Hindu and the Muslims.³²

This political inter relation developed a happy social outlook. And its origin is in religious synthesis. We have already spoken of the loose morality in the Hindu society. A very powerful and opposite force was necessary to make it living with potency, Islamic religious democracy served this purpose.

With the advent of Islamic culture in India its stormy conquest and proselytising zeal the Hindu society curved itself within a very narrow conservative shell with hard walls of caste-rigidity around it. Self sufficient rural economy based upon joint family system remained the only castle of indolence, the weak doors of which were kicked open by the converted and the exploited. The important attempt of caste-rigidity was made by the Smriti writers—like Madhavacharya, the commentator on Parasar Smriti, Visvesvara, the author of Madanaparijata, Kulluka, the commentator on Manu, and Raghunandan, a contemporary of Chaitanya. This was the final futile fomentation of a defeated mentality. The soul of India regained its consciousness and stretched its hands to embrace the new democratic creed. It was a Catholic approximation and not individual identification. On the other hand Islam in India had become Indianised. To understand this we can look back to the evolution of Buddhism. When Buddhism was spread outside India, in China, Japan, Burma etc. it took up the local colour and became Chinese or Japanese or Burmese—Buddhism which had only superficial resemblance with the mother-religion. Similarly

30. Al-Uthbi—Tarikh-i-Yamini : Elliot, Vol. II pp. 14-52.

Baibaki—Tarikh-i-S Subutigin—Ibid pp. 125-129.

31. For such examples see the Advanced History of India by R. C. Majumder, H. C. Ray Choudhury and K. K. Dutta. pp. 402-403.

32. Ibid. p. 403.

Indian Islam came out of Arabic or Turkish Yoke and was free in mixing with the sister religion. This aspect has been emphatically expressed by Professor Humayun Kabir who says that Muslims and Hindus fought against one another not for any religious propaganda but for political existence. There was hardly any religious question which dominated them.³³

Islamic monotheism and Hindu monotheisms of the Upanishads met very near. Acharya Kshitimohan Sastri thinks that Indian spiritualism was becoming weak in rigid stagnation. Islamic ideas let open its prison.³⁴ The reactionary school of the Smriti writers lived in their own secluded shell with utmost contempt to the admixture of Islam and Hinduism. This admixture was made by great men from the so called lower classes. But this religious synthesis has got an economic background. As the eminent historian Jai Chandra Vidyalankar thinks that from the fourteenth century onward as soon as Islam got her foothold strong and permanent in the Indian soil, the Muslims were Indianised.³⁵ Living under the same rural economy and the economic productive possibilities being the same on these two peoples, the Hindus and the Muslims began to grow a simi-

lar if not same outlook of life. Thus emerged out of the Hindus and the Muslims, a number of social reformers and religious preachers.

The first was Ramananda, a Kanyakubja Brahmin, who travelled through out India with his famous disciples and preaching the doctrine of Bhakti to all classes and both sexes. The important thing to note is that this great preacher had among his disciples low-caste men, Muslims and women. He said, "The Stone-God does not speak.....it breaks down with kicks. The worshipper of the stone-God looses everything out of his foolishness." Another preacher of the Bhakti cult was Vallabhachariya, the preacher of monotheistic Suddha-advaitabad i. e., Pure Non-Duality. Bhakti was most intensely preached by Chaitanyadeva of Bengal who preached only the class-less idea among every class of people, Hindus and Muslims. His biographer Krishnadas Kaviraj lay down his rule of self-identification with Lord Krishna. Namadeva from Maharashtra similarly spoke of the identification of the self with God. Kabir, whose mental background was Hindu, spoke to the Hindus to give up class distinction and caste-rigidity.³⁶ Similarly he advised the Muslims to be simple in life. He thought that the Hindu and

33. Humayun Kabir—Hamari Parampara (Hindi) p. 36.

34. Modhya Yuge Bharatiya Sadhanar Dhara p. 3.

35. Itihash-Pravesh (Hindi) part II p. 65.

36. Tagore—Hundred Poems of Kabir.

Turk were pots of same clay : Allah and Rama are but different names. Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, preached the unity of God-head and condemned with all vehemence the hypocrisy of Hinduism and Islam.

The inter-religious, outlook became more and more prominent with time. The futility of war became evident and thoughtful men on either side began to work about a better understanding. The Muslim saint like Fariduddin Shakarjang of Pakpatan, Nizamuddin Aulia of Delhi and Ghisudarar of the Deccan tended to lessen the force of prejudice and bigotry. "The Hindus began to worship Muslim saints and Muslims began to show respect for Hindu Gods."³⁷

The religious synthesis among these two peoples also led to the betterment of the evasive faculty of the Indian mind. This is revealed in the contemporary expression of Indian art. Fergusson thinks that the scheme of the architecture of the time is Pathan or Indo-Saracenic. But according to Havell the contemporary art was solely Indian. But it is rather a mixture of Indian method and Islamic spirit or vice versa. Sir John Marshall says : "Broadly speaking, Indo-Islamic architecture derive its character from both sources, though not in an equal

degree." Local specialities mixed with the dominators' influence created indigenous style. The Indian craftsmen and sculptors built temple and mosques sometime in the same style. Sometime pure Hindu materials were used to build Muslim mosques : for example the Adbaidins ka Jopra at Ajmer. The conditions, in which the Indo-Muslim art grew up made it necessary that there should be a fusion of the two ideals. Hindu gorgeousness and Islamic simplicity made a common cause to produce an amalgamation. Marshall comments : ".....a fundamental characteristic that supplied a common link between the two styles was the fact that both Islamic and Hindu art was inherently decorative. Ornament was as vital to the one as to the other ; both were dependent on it for their very being." Thus the two principal monuments of Alauddin's reign—the Jamat Khana Masjid at the Dargah of Nizamuddin Auliya and the Alai Darwaza at the Qutb Minar—show the growing preponderance of Muslim ideas over those of the Hindu architects.³⁸

Lastly, historians are of opinion that India had made a profound influence upon the Muslim World as early as seventh or eighth centuries A. D. Indian science and culture

37. Iswari Prasad : History of India (1942) p. 485

38. E. V. Havell : Ancient and Medieval Architecture in India.

J. Fergusson : History of Indian and Eastern Architecture vol. II.

J. Marshall : Cambridge History of India vol. III Edited by Sir W. Haig.

were highly appreciated in the foreign land. Tahari thinks that Khalifa Harn-al-Rashid was under the treatment of an Indian physician by name Manok. Alberuni says that during the time of Khalif Mansur (A. D. 753-774) two Indian books, the Brahmasiddhanta and the Khanda Khadyaka, were translated into Arabic by Alfazari and Yakub Ibu Tarik. Arabian scholars used to visit India and they also engaged Hindu scholars to come to Bagdad, made them chief physicians of their hospitals and ordered them to translate from sanskrit into Arabic books on medicine, pharmacology, toxicology, philosophy and other subjects.³⁹

Another direct effect of this synthesis was the creation of a camp language i. e. Urdu which has now a days acquired a prominent place in Indian languages. This language helped Indian and non-Indians to come to much closer terms. Again provincial

languages grew in enormous volumes with the help of Muslim kings.⁴⁰

Such, in brief, is the historical synthesis in the early medieval India. The subject matter is a broad one and it can not come within the limitation of a single essay. We have tried to show this cultural synthesis in outlines. A deeper study is not allowed to us at present. We have tried to do best within our limited scope. Yet accepting our limitations we must end with the words of an eminent scholar : "Detailed investigations however valuable and interesting are after all material to be merged into generalisations. The most valuable generalisations are made, however, when the observer is at the same time a generaliser ; but 'doubtless' as Makawbal said to Hannibal after battle of Cannal, 'the gods have not bestowed everything on the same man : you, Hannibal, know how to conquer ; but you do not know how to use your victory.'"⁴¹

39. Sachan Alberuni's India Preface pp XXXI—XXXII

40. D. C. Sen—Bangahbasa Sahitya,

41. A. C. Haddon History of Anthropology (1945) Preface.

THEORY OF COMEDY

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There are two general notions about comedy : that it should end happily and that it should produce laughter. These notions are rather crude and incomplete. And they are no satisfactory explanations of the nature of comedies, particularly of modern comedies.

There is a conventional belief that a tragedy ends with death and comedy with marriage. But death or marriage is no real guide in the matter of determining the class of a play. *As You Like It* is called a comedy, and it ends with the union of Orlando and Rosalind, of Oliver and Celia. As it is labelled a comedy and as there is no death in it, one may be tempted to pin one's faith on the conventional belief that a tragedy ends with death and comedy with marriage. But supposing Shakespeare had caused Oliver to die from the bite of the snake would he thereby have turned the play into a tragedy? *Macbeth* is known as a tragedy. But certainly it would not have been a comedy, if Macbeth had not been killed by Macduff or Lady Macbeth had not died of delirium. Mrs. Warren in Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession* does not die. But can this play be taken as a pleasant comedy in the conventional sense of the term?

In *Arms and the Man*, Raina finally chooses her 'chocolate-cream soldier'. But what would have happened if Bluntschli had been a married man, or Raina a teen-aged girl? Would the play then have ceased to be a comedy? The answer is obvious. It is quite clear that death or marriage is no test of a tragedy or comedy and that to call a play comedy, simply because it ends with a marriage, is a misnomer.

Then there is the question of laughter. The popular idea is that if a play makes one laugh, it is a comedy. But is it proper to indentify the causes of laughter with the themes of comedies? Laughter is an old, very old human habit. And it does not always seem a very pleasant habit.

What is the cause of laughter in life? And what are the types of laughter found in life? These are two natural questions that confront a student as he tries to explain the nature of comedy on the basis of the theory of laughter.

A man is tickled and he laughs, a fatty fellow tumbles down on a dry ground and people laugh; a jester causes his spectators to laugh by his talk; and a mad man laughs wildly. Should all these cases go in the same

catalogue of laughter? No one perhaps will claim so.

The cause of laughter is both physical and psychological. A man laughs, when there is in him some physical sensation. This sensation may not always be very pleasant to him. Nevertheless, it touches his comic spirit and makes him laugh. Again, a man laughs as his mind realizes something funny in a situation or in the conduct of a man.

And the types of laughter in human life, as already noted, are varied. A man may be prone to laughter on various occasions. A mad man laughs and a clown laughs. Their laughter is not of the same order. "Laughter," as remarkably observed by L. J. Potts, "is a very erratic and unreliable action, ranging from the hysterical scream or giggle to the deliberate trumpeting of disapproval or discontent, and from the loud guffaw of the vacant mind to an utterly peaceful signal of sudden sympathy or complete understanding."

And mere laughter is not the sign of comedy. Lear laughs and the Fool laughs. But do they make **King Lear** a comedy? The fact is far from that. A young man moving through a crowded street in a motley-coloured dress may well become the object of fun, but the laughter caused by his dress can never be the substance of a comedy. Mrs. Malaprop's 'oracular tongue' and 'nice derangement of

epitaphs' can easily lead a man to burst out in irrepressible laughter. But **The Rivals** does not become a comedy for this 'great mistress of language.' What Mrs Malaprop does provoke, is nothing but the mirth of a farce.*

'The logic of comedy' writes Feibleman in his illuminating treatise **In Praise of comedy**, 'is the part of aesthetics, an aesthetics of comedy which proved amusing would be a false aesthetic just as a vaudeville comedian who chose to expound to his audience the Bergsonian theory of laughter would be a bad comedian.'² The emotions roused by a comedy is not the cause of laughter, and hence laughter can never be the signal of a comedy. As a matter of fact the end of a fine comedy seldom finds people laughing. The end of **Arms and the Man**, with Bluntschli talking business and Sergias exclaiming in jealous admiration "What a man is

* Farce is not comedy. It is "a short dramatic work in which the action is trivial and the sole purpose is to excite mirth." It is roughly, [according to Potts, "physical sensationalism of a ludicrous kind" "comedy with the meaning left out."

Potts further adds that 'though farce is not comedy, comedy can contain farce.' The statement may be expanded by pointing out that the farcical humour or farce can be raised to the level of comedy or "the comic" if the author can give it (situation, character or even an incident) a general signification and raise it to the level of the universal.

2. Feibleman In Praise of Comedy (p)

1. L. J. Potts Comedy (p-19)

he a man"³ produces not laughter but appreciation for Shaw's masterly dramatic artistry. "Many of the greatest comedies" in the opinion of Pott, "have a rather sobering effect."⁴ The end of a good comedy, indeed, sobers one's view of life and has nothing to do with unthinking, idle laughter.

But the old question remains. What is comedy? Is this comedy something mysterious and inexplicable?

Most of the definitions of the world of art and literature go back to Aristotle, the great Greek Master. And his definition of comedy runs thus:

"Comedy...is an imitation of bad characters; bad, not with respect to every sort of vice, but to the ridiculous only, as being species of turpitude or deformity; since it may be defined to be fault of such a sort as is neither painful nor destructive. A ridiculous farce, for example, is something ugly and distorted, but not so as to cause pain."⁵

Aristotle's theory might be applicable to the comedies of ancient Greece, but so far as the comedies of Shakespeare and of modern times are concerned, it is quite untenable. Only fools will find the imitation of the ridiculous in the character of Touch-

stone who "uses his folly like a stalking horse, and under the presentation of that he shoots his wit."⁶ And what is ridiculous in Shaw's *Arms and the Man*? Shaw has not certainly imitated the ridiculous in his coward-soldier. Shaw's ridicule is, no doubt, patent in his portrayal of Raina, Sergius and the Petkoffs. But it is a ridicule different from the sense in which Aristotle used the term 'ridiculous'. And certainly an 'ugly and distorted' face, how much innocent the mirth produced by it may be, can never be the basis of a modern comedy.

Aristotle's statement that a comedy is an imitation of the ridiculous implies that a comic playwright should primarily be concerned with the depiction of the ludicrous traits of human nature. But the presence of something ludicrous stirs the comic spirit of man, and he laughs. The question of laughter returns again.

In his celebrated *Essay on Comedy*, Meredith points out that the business of comedy is to awaken thoughtful laughter.⁷ The term "thoughtful laughter" may seem paradoxical to many, but it is the recognition of the fact that laughter which lives in many

3. Shaw *Arms and the Man* (Act. III)

4. L. J. Potts—*Comedy* (p 19)

5. Aristotle—*Poetics and Rhetoric*, Everyman's Library No 901 (p12)

* The term **ridiculous** means 'fitted to excite ridicule!' A man becomes ridiculous when he excites contempt or laughter. "Ridiculous" in Aristotle refers to the laughable aspect of a man who is an object of fun to others.

6. Shakespeare. *As you Like It* (Act V sc IV)

7. Meredith—*Essay on Comedy*.

forms, is often engineered by thought. There is empty, thoughtless laughter, and there is also thoughtful laughter, that is laughter fundamentally based on the thoughtful appreciation of certain elements in man and his society. Sober people laugh spontaneously, when they witness a duel of wits. And they do so because of their appreciation of the thoughtful element in the material of the parties involved in such an exchange.

But the frontiers of thoughtful laughter are not distinctly marked. In fact, thoughtful laughter is, in many cases, in the border-country between laughter and tear. Macbeth murders Duncan laments for his inability to get the mercy of God. To many people his utterance—"But wherefore could not I pronounce Amen? I had most need of blessing, and Amen stuck in my throat"⁸—may appear pathetic and tearful. But a thoughtful man finds in it food for his thoughtful laughter. Macbeth has violated the sacred commandment of God, and he still expects His mercy. How silly this Shakespearean hero is! His is just like a child's claim to eat the cake and have it intact at the same time.* And the man laughs thoughtfully, for he has realized the wide difference between what Macbeth has done and what difference Macbeth

wishes to have. When Sergius in *Arms and the Man* displays his conventional heroism by telling boldly Bluntschli to his face, "I never apologize", the audience present may laugh at him. But laughter is here not far from tears that a thoughtful realization of this Bulgarian hero's tragedy will lead one to shed.

"Thoughtful laughter," then, is no criterion of comedy, as it may be present in tragedy, too. In what point does a comedy differ, then, from a tragedy?

One of the valid principles which help one to find out the nature of comedy, is to differentiate it from tragedy. There are opinions galore to show how comedy is to be distinguished from tragedy.

Aristotle contends that "the aim of comedy being to exhibit men worse than we find them, that of tragedy better."⁹ Any one having a fair conception of a Shakespearean hero cannot certainly agree with the Greek master that tragedy exhibits men better than what they really are. How can Orlando and Rosalind be taken as worse than normal men and women? Falder of Galsworthy's tragedy "JUSTICE" is worse than many real young men of his age and position, and Shaw's Nicola and Louka are certainly many times better than the servants generally found in society.

Bergson in his discussion on

This suggestion is made by Dothie in his *Shakespeare* (p p 163-164)

8. *Shakespeare Macbeth* (Act II Sc II)

9. Aristotle *Poet and Rhetoric*. Every man's Library No 901 (P. 7)

Laughter claims that "comedy bears a closer resemblance to real life than tragedy does"¹⁰. But drama, whether comedy or tragedy, is based on life, and no true drama can be divorced from it. It is too much to imagine that comedy bears a greater resemblance to life than that what tragedy does. The story of the forest of Arden is perhaps not more real to life than the nocturnal deed in the castle of Inverness.

There is again Horace Walpole's famous dictum that "life is a comedy to those who think and tragedy to those who feel."¹¹ This brings the issues of thinking and feeling in the appreciation of a play. Walpole's maxim may be applied to the realm of drama to suggest that if the dramatist touches the thought of his audiences, the play is a comedy, and if he touches their feeling, it is a case of tragedy.

"There's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so"¹² says Hamlet, and he expresses here a great truth of life. Marriage may be thought good by some people and bad by some other. And marriage does not become good or bad by their contrary ideas. There is no golden rule of thinking. One may think Macbeth a hero and

another a villain; Bluntschli may be an intelligent realist to one and a romantic anarchist to another.

There is equally nothing absolute about human feeling. People may feel funny when a man is tripped off his feet while treading on the husk of a plantain. But supposing that the wife of the man is with him what will be her feelings? Quite different certainly. To them he is an object of fun; to her he is an object of pity and sympathy. They may take the situation as comic, but she can take it only as tragic.

The fact is that both in feeling and in thinking the point of view of the person or persons concerned is of utmost importance. It is the point of view of those people or of the wife that makes the incident of a man falling in the street funny or pitiable.

And it is the point of view that determines whether a play is a tragedy or a comedy. Baker in his *Development of Shakespeare* points out how the Trial-scene of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, which we know as a comedy, becomes a tragedy from the point of view of Shylock.¹³ Shylock fails to avenge the wrong done to his race by the Christians. He fails to achieve his ambition like so many tragic heroes. There is something tragic in his failure, and *The Merchant of Venice* may, in the feeling of one who has the tendency to

10. Bergson *Laughter* (Trans Brereton and Rothwell)

11. *Letters Horace Walpole*, ed Mrs. Toynbee (P 346)

12. Shakespeare *Hamlet* (Act II Sc II)

13. Baker *Development of Shakespeare*.

look at the whole thing from the point of view of the Jew, seem to be a 'tragedy of Shylock, the Jew. *Arms and the Man* is a comedy from the point of view of Bluntschli, Raina and Louka. But from the point of view of Sergius, despite his union with Louka, the end of play is rather tragic, for, Sergius has been beaten both in soldiering and in love.

The nature of a play, however, is determined by the point of view of the playwright as well as of playgoers. And a skilful dramatist knows how to make the play tragic or comic from the point of view of his audience. The Elizabethan audiences were against Shylock because of their strong racial prejudice against the Jew. The master artist in Shakespeare knew that and drew the play romantically from the commercial point of view. And *The Merchant of Venice*, which ought to have ended

with the Trial Scene, was dragged up to farcical ring episode to satisfy the point of view of the vulgar Elizabethan audience.

The point of view of the playwright and of the playgoer is the predominant factor in the assesment of a tragedy or a comedy. If the point of view of the author tallies with that of the majority of his audience, the recognition of the spirit of the play as a tragedy or a comedy becomes very easy. As you Like It or *Arms and the Man* is a comedy, because the point of view of the author and his audience is in that direction.

After all, life is neither a tragedy nor a comedy. It is a tragi-comedy, a serio-comic affair. And drama which deals with life, too, cannot properly have any absolute business either with tragedy or with comedy.

GLADSTONE AND HIS SPIRIT THROUGH AGES

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"A statesman" writes Sir Richard Lodge, in his lecture on Sir Robert Peel "is a man who performs same constructive work, who guides a country through a difficult crisis, who restores its prosperity and self confidence after a period of disaster or distress, whose career marks an epoch in its history".

History is full of many examples of statesmen who guided the countries they served through immense difficulties, inspired them with faith and confidence inspite of the turmoils and disasters which they faced. Taking this into consideration, it is time, I think, to consider what sort of statesman a country should possess today. Let us just consider for a moment how dangerous the consequence will be if a modern statesman sincerely believing and acting on the principle "My nation—right or wrong" guides a country towards that direction. Thanks those heavenly forces which compelled Mr. Eden to submit his resignation the otherday. Had Mr. Eden been allowed to continue his intransigence and irreconcilable attitude towards Nasser and the Egyptian people, God knows what misfortune would have stared U.K. in the face! World is fast changing. Resignation of Mr. Eden in 1933 opposing the "appeasement policy" of Chamberlain was probably a mistake. But the resignation of Eden in 1957 was definitely a necessity. Achievement of an world order based on international brotherhood and fellow feeling may still be a dream to realise but rejection of the principle "My nation—right or wrong" is an accomplished fact. Alternative to Co-existence is co-

destruction. Eden must radically change. He must change his principles. He must change his modus operandi too.

If we turn over the pages or modern world history, we shall come across statesmen—a few indeed—who did guide the nations they served on different principles. We wonder sometimes, how before the alter of so-called doctrines and rigid formulas of some statesmen there were much unnecessary sacrifices of human lives. Indeed a nation today requires a guide—a guide which will enable it to distinguish right from the wrong and lead it towards the achievement of that end. A statesman of today must convince the people that the interest of a section must be sacrificed if it comes into conflict with the greater interest of the community at large. Externally he should make the nation feel that every other nation as a distinct unit of culture and civilisation has every right to develop itself in its own peculiar way. Gladstone, Wilson and Nehru are all examples of this type of statesman.

Gladstone's life, I think, is a burning example of a statesman who was prepared to sacrifice his earlier principles if he felt it to be a necessity for the greater interest of the community. To the superficial observer it would seem that the life of this statesman about whom I have closed to write these few lines was full of contradictions. Gladstone was brought up in an atmosphere of rigid conservatism. He opposed the Reform Act of 1832. The Act abolished many "rotten boroughs," the electorate was enlarged and the House of commons became more representative in character and

composition. Gladstone, who in his later life became an advocate of all liberal principles opposed the act. He denounced the Reform Act of 1867 also as a "proclamation of war of classes." But when he came to power in 1868, we find him following a different policy. He became a devout Champion of a liberal policy in domestic and foreign politics. The Elementary Education Act of 1870, The Trades Union Act of 1871 The Reform Act of 1884 are all examples of the reforming zeal of Gladstone,

"His deepest concern was to maintain the religious character of the state which as he then believed involved the exclusion of many privileges of Dissenters, Catholics and Free thinkers" But without any change in his own religious belief his steady growth of liberalism and profound sympathy for others' feeling taught him not to restrict by authority the religious life of others.

Gladstone himself said of him "I was brought up to distrust and dislike liberty, I learned to believe in it. That is the key to all my changes"

Gladstone is said to have displayed his genius most in the sphere of finance. But here also we find him undergoing a rapid conversion. Gladstone the protectionist became an uncompromising champion of free trade. Brought up in an atmosphere of conservatism, it was but natural for him to subscribe to the doctrines of individualism but his intense sympathy for the poor and his readiness to follow the conclusions of honest and sincere conviction drove him to advocate the causes of ameliorative legislation to cure some of the social ills of the day. This is Gladstone—a statesman full of contradictions!

In his introduction to "Life of Gladstone" it has been truly observed by Sir Wymss Reid, that all these mental changes were indeed forced upon him by the "Stern process of intellectual conviction" Along with his love for the past and sympathy for old institutions, he had,

to quote the same author "that over mastering sense of truth which led him to submit himself to the irresistible process of logic, when once had become convinced that the days of the old things had passed by and that the welfare of his country demanded that he should turn to the things which were new"

What it is due to that inspite of all these contradictions, Gladstone was intensely loved by his fellow country men? I do not think it is because of his gift of the gab, eloquence or anything of the sort. It is because of his appeal to truth and humanity which inspire common people most. Lord Beaconsfield, it is said, was always a keen judge of men. But Mr. Gladstone made mistakes in the estimates of individual character. "But if he was a bad judge of individual, he had an unrivalled knowledge of and love for mankind at large." Gladstone loved his country men and that is why common people of England had an intense love for their great leader. "Love attracts love." Not only this, Gladstone believed that the common people of England had the same moral nature as himself and therefore with great hope and confidence, he appealed to their sense of truth and justice. ".....this faith in our common humanity even more than his love for mankind at large." Observes Reid "that secured for him, his unique and splendid place in the affection of so many of his fellow-countrymen." Neither for national honour nor even for a magic stroke of diplomacy was he prepared to mutilate truth or sacrifice humanity.

It is because of this love for truth and humanity that he has been characterised as a total failure in the field of foreign politics. Gladstone, the humanist could not passively submit to the wholesale massacre of innocent Christian subjects in Bulgaria and raised his emphatic voice of protest against the horrible cruelty of the Sultan. Disraeli and many other eminent British Statesmen of the time

realised the necessity of maintaining the integrity of Turkey to safeguard the imperial interest of Great Britain. But the Gladstone who was more a humanist than a so-called diplomat advocated the expulsion of the Turks "bag and baggage" This reminds us of another similar incident which induced President Wilson to take a definite stand against a brutal cruelty—sinking of the British liner Lusitania without a moment's warning by a German submarine during the first World War. The wailing cry of twelve hundred human lives reached Wilson and he made up his mind that the United States must enter into the war in the name of Humanity. Wilson's method has a "missionary diplomacy."

Indeed, from the very beginning of the first World War President Wilson tried to follow an impartial course and in his famous "Peace without victory" address of January 22, 1917, he gave out that "no differences in moral outlook separated the Allies and the Central Powers." Many of the early violations of International Law by Great Britain were made the subject of formal protest by the Government of Wilson. But when the President failed to bring the Germans to an abandonment of unrestricted submarine warfare, he resolved that U. S. A. must take a bold stand to put an end to the cruel practice. Even when in war the President was working not from any motive of revenge. He sincerely believed that the rulers of Germany and not the German people as such were to be blamed. "The World must be safe for democracy" was his cry. In his famous "Fourteen points" the President made it clear that if peace was to be a lasting peace, it must not be a dictated peace. It must rest on the willing support of the people. This implies that every subject nationally should have a right to have its own political organisation run by the chosen representatives of its people.

Thus establishment of an international

organisation consisting of member states based on the principle of self-determination was made on the principle of the war and after the the Central issue of the war and after the victory of 1918, the President went to Paris with a missionary zeal to incorporate in the engagement of Versailles his high and lofty ideas of peace, democracy and the right of subject nationalities to determine their own fate.

Working on these noble principles Wilson contested the French design to take away Rhineland from Germany and "fought tenaciously French ambition for the annexation of the Saar." Transformation of Germany Austria and Hungary into strictly national lines and the creation of Small States like Poland Lithuania, Finland, Czechoslovakia etc, owe their origin to a large extent to Woodrow Wilson's ideas of the right of self-determination.

The Senate of 1919 which at that time was controlled by his Republican opponents insisted upon some reservations to the treaty considering that some of the articles to the Covenant of the League of Nations, specially the articles VIII, X and XVI limited the sovereign power of the U. S. Congress in its external sphere, conferred on it by the constitution of the United States of America. Indeed, the Lodge Reservations aimed at maintaining the sovereign power of the U. S. Congress, which, in the opinion of the Republican Senators, were to a great extent curtailed by some provisions of the Covenant. But to President Wilson the proposed reservations were as good "as a rejection of the treaty." "It is this treaty or none" was his stand. "We must either go in or stay out" he said. The stand was right. Wilson clearly realised that with the modern mechanical and scientific developments, the globe turned into a "single whispering gallery" The United States, he rightly thought, could not escape its obligations as an active member of an international organisation to maintain world peace. He therefore wanted United States to "demonstrate that the greatest nation

must not be the master nation but the servant nation—the servant of mankind.”

Wilson believed, as Gladstone did, that “the people could be relied upon to judge correctly when issues were placed clearly and faithfully before him” With great hope and confidence therefore, the President decided to appeal to the people. When the whole issue was thrown into the Campaign of 1920, Wilson undertook a hurricane tour reminding the people that United States “had an inescapable moral obligation to bear its share of the responsibility for world peace.” Depleted in mind and body the strain proved too much for his falling health. The President laid down his life for an ideal—a noble ideal indeed,—peace, democracy and right of self-determination! The defeat for President Wilson was the defeat of humanity.

When the President was setting sail for Europe to attend the Peace Conference, the subject nationalities with their hearts full of hope were waiting with rapt attention to hear what the President would say. He became a saviour so to say, of the subject nationalities. Does it not remind us how Gladstone became a champion of the freedom of small nationalities in the eyes of Europe? Guided by the principles of promoting peace and securing liberation of the oppressed, Gladstone helped the cause of Italian liberation, granted the Ionians their desire to be united with their brethren at home, abandoned the project of reconquering Sudan rightly struggling to be free, upheld the cause of Balkan Christians against the humiliating treatment at the hands of the Turks.”

Those who characterise Gladstone as “wholly ignorant in the dominion of foreign politics” fail to catch at his basic approach to international problems. “Let us do as we would be done by, let us pay all the respect to a feeble state and to the infancy of free institutions which we would desire and exact from

others towards their authority and strength.” These words which he uttered in a noble protest against Palmerstone’s dictatorial method in Doa Pacifico Affair (1850) from the Keynote of Gladstone’s foreign politics. In his famous speech at West Calder, he defined his six principles which form the basis of his foreign policy.

In this speech, he pointed out the need of treating all nations as equals in their international relations. He emphasised at the same time the need for maintaining peace in the world without England’s being involved in any specific alliance or entangling engagements. This reminds us the noble principles of Panchshilla: the mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence.

How striking is the resemblance! If the international relation of nation states had been guided on these principles this world without having the “entangling engagements” like NATO or SEATO would have been a much happier place to live in.

Because of this “moralistic approach” to international problems, that Gladstone has been characterised by some as “wholly ignorant in the dominion of foreign politics.” Is it really ignorance? If it is ignorance, then, Nehru’s speech in the Lok Sabha on Nov 16, 1956 on Hungarian and Egyptian crises betray his lack of knowledge in foreign politics. From the very beginning” said Sri Nehru “we made it clear that, in our opinion that people of Hungary should be allowed to determine their own future according to their wishes and that foreign forces should be withdrawn”. After all Russia supported India’s justified stand on Goa and Kashmir. Machiavellian principles will suggest passive submission to all wrongs if it helps the achievement of a selfish gain. Machiavelly will say Churchill was right when

he revealed that he wanted the Allied Powers to turn their bayonets against Soviet Russia towards the end of Second World War.

"Moral judgments since they rest on a foundation of deep feeling, rather than on exact and precise analysis may and sometimes do verge on sentimentality." —Observes a famous writer on U.S. foreign politics. There may be some truth in the observation but let us not forget at the same time the culminating effect of the policy pursued by statesmen like Palmerstone, Churchill and Eden. In such a case the world divided into a few dozen empires will destroy the entire fabric of human civilisation. It will be silly to call Laski indulging in cheap sentimentality when he says Grammar of Politics. "The spiritual life of Europe belongs not to Cæsar and Napoleon but to Christ, the civilisation of the East has been more influenced by Buddha than by Chengis Khan and Akbar. We must overcome hatred by love and evil by good."

It is sometimes argued that Gladstone and Nehru, when they were in opposition expressed many lofty ideals which they did not translate into action when they come to power. Gladstone failed to pacify Ireland. He instigated the South in the American Civil war (1861) to secede from the union. His slowly growing literalism did not calminate in conferring independence on India. We have seen Gladstone was an ardent internationalist. His sympathy for Irish grievances is wellknown to everybody. He could not tolerate the cruel oppression of Turkey over the Bulgarian and advocated a policy of expulsion of the Turks "bag and baggage." It is the same feeling and sympathy for a "Nation-in-making" which inspired to give his famous New Castle speech of October 7, 1862.

There he says "we may have our own opinions about slavery; we may be for and

against the South; but there is no doubt that Jefferson Davis and other leader of the South have made an army; they are making it appears a navy; and they have made what is more than either, they have made a nation". The speech shows that Gladstone the internationalist was not at all inspired with the sinister motive of dividing the power of America and meddle in their politics with an outlook of an imperialist. If he made any mistake, it was because of his wrong reading of the situation and the sort of affairs prevailing in that region. Gladstone's welcome to the decision of the Geneva Arbitration in the Alabama case is sufficient proof of his honest intentions. As for India, we should not forget that during his prime ministership Lord Ripon introduced many measures which every student of modern Indian history will welcome and in external sphere, the policy pursued by this great viceroy was a reversal of the "visionary schemes for the extension of British influence in Central Asia" of Lord Lytton, "a Statesman" viceroy of a "dear and honoured chief" —Lord Beaconsfield. Gladstone refused to use India as an instrument for the expansion of imperial interest of Britain. What more can we expect from a Prime minister of Great Britain in the 19th century?

Critics of Gladstone should remember that he was a statesman—yes, the type of statesman which every nation state should possess today—and not a missionary. If the world is not yet fit to receive a missionary statesman like Asoka, it has produced atleast a Gladstone, a Wilson and a Nehru to inspire peoples in the ultimate triumph of humanity. It is for the present generation of the world to decide what course of action it will now follow. Will it passively listen to what Gladstone and his spirit through ages speaks and make the ground green and fertile enough to facilitate the advent of Asoka once again?

HISTORY THROUGH THE AGES

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We are historians by nature and philosophers by accident. The love of history is inseparable from our nature, because it is another name for self-love. We imagine that the things which affect us must affect all—this sentiment runs through mankind. The same maseim carries us backward and forward, to the past and to the future ages. We are men, and nothing that concerns man do we deem a matter of indifference to us.

‘Tears to human suffering are due,

And mortal hopes defeated and overthrown
Are mourned by man.’

There is one mind common to all individual men. What Kapila has thought I may think, what Budha has felt I may feel, what Kalidāsa has written I may appreciate, into what Sri Ramkrishna has realised I may have a peep, what at any time, at any place, any one has done, felt or thought, I can understand. Thus the whole of history is in me. A man is the whole encyclopaedia of facts and without reference to the universal man each individual is inexplicable. “Who hath access to this universal mind is,” according to Emerson, “a party to all that is or can be done, for this is the one and sovereign agent; of the work of this mind history is the record.” This is the true scientific conception of history.

The term ‘history’ is of Greek origin. It was originally used to mean investigation, inquiry, the search for knowledge in the widest sense. In course of time, the historian or the seeker after knowledge was superseded by the *historikos*, the reciter of stories. Consequently, history has been considered as a form of literature

product of the materials gathered during a long search for knowledge. History has, therefore, two distinct meanings—firstly, investigation; secondly, literary presentation. The first is history the science; the second is history the art. It is a branch of ‘polite letters.’ All possible pains are taken for the display of the beauty of rhetoric and style.

The literary gifts of expression vary in inverse ratio with scientific investigation. Accuracy here is not wanted but only animation. The literary historian has in view the pleasure and the moral edification of the reader. The popular view that the literary skill rather than pains-taking investigation is the qualification which the historian needs, may be illustrated by the fact that many successful books of history were written by litterateurs rather than historians. “The conspicuous champions of literary history were in old days Livy and Plutarch;—in modern times, Clarendon, Hume, Smollet, Goldsmith, Robertson, Alison, Michelet, Thiers.” Imagine, a metaphysician Hume, a novelist Smollet, an essayist Goldsmith as historian and consider the value of literary history. What about “the most perfect English history which is to be found in the historical plays of Shakespeare”? Shakespeare, too, often studied his original ‘sources’ in his Holinshed. Litterateurs have made history the hand-maid of religion, tradition, morality, politics to serve their purpose and the result is that we find all sorts of queer nations associated with history. History has been represented by them at sundry times under different figures. They are clothed in beautiful

ful language, but they reveal only half-truths. In their hands the science of history was caricatured and muddled. It was deliberately prostituted. A few illustrations will make the point clear that history the art is only the child of genius. It has no traceable line of development. Different views of history were put forward from different angles of vision. But the true scientific view of history was obscured. To Carlyle history is only the biography of great men. Shelly considers "history as an epic poem written by time upon the memories of men; the past like an inspired rhapsodist fills the theatre of ever-lasting generations with harmony." To Shakespear—

"All the world's a stage

And all the men and women merely
players,

They have their exits and entrances."

If the world is a stage, history is a drama in many acts and scenes, where kings, republics and subjects have for so many eyes played their parts. To Releigh, history was 'the Choir invisible of the immortal dead that live again.' In his preface to the history of the world he writes, "History hath triumphed over time, which besides it nothing but eternity hath triumphed over. "To the orthodox Christians, the central fact of history is the life of Christ. St. Augustine in his 'City of God' carries the world's history back to the origin of evil at the creation and his disciple Paulus Orosius demonstrates the coming of Christ with mathematical exactness. The fall of Rome, the terrestrial city, heralds the advance of the City of God. The fall of the empire is for the coming of the millennium. A master of biting satire and of pulverizing invective, Voltaire attacked 'the God in history' on the basis of reason and its miraculous procedure on that of science. But such is the innate conservatism of human nature that the modern evolutionists and meliorists are

continually harping on the same note. Throughout the ages no increasing purpose in running and thoughts of men are widening with the process of the sun. To them, the most happy symbol of history is that of a ship sailing on the tractless ocean of time, with a venerable pilot at the helm, steering by the light of the ever-lasting stars.

From the above review, we find that literary history is a dogmatist furnishing for every doubt readymade and hackneyed determinations. The scientific history; on the other hand, is a Socrates, knowing nothing but guiding others to knowledge by suggestive interrogations. To the scientific historians, "history presents itself under the figure of a stage coach with the horse running away. On the front a number of eager, men is urging the most contrary advice on the driver, whose chief object is to keep his seat, while at the back a couple of old gentlemen with spy-glasses are carefully surveying the road already travelled. There are also the quiet observers in the centre who watch the movements of the horses and note the strain on the wheels, axles and bolts; who listen to the hubbub on the front seat and the grave conversation at the rear." The eager men on the front row are the radicals. They are the Jack Cades, the Dantons and the Gradgrinds of the world. They reject past history, as the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind. "The past ages were no more deserving of study than wolves and bears." The old men sitting on the back benches are the staunch conservatives. They are the Lycurguses the Manus and the Raghunandans of the world. Their common-place gossip finds fifty different meanings for history. History is but a pliant instrument in their hands to carry out their preconceived and superstitious ideas. The historicans are sitting in the centre. They are neither conservatives nor liberals. They are the most conservative of the liberals and

the most liberal of the conservatives. Taking little for granted they seek to know the ground they stand on and the road they travel and the reason why. The true historic spirit is rare in men, because only a few of them are endowed with scientific intelligence. The scientific historian must throw every idea overboard to find out the real truth. The first history of the true historic spirit we find in *Hecataeus of Miletus*. It reads like a sentence from Lord Acton. *Hecataeus of Miletus* thus speaks: 'I write as I deem true; for the traditions of the Greeks seem to me manifold and laughable.' These words mark an epoch in the growth of scientific history. As a maker of historical chronology Herodotus has been called the father of rationalised history. His plan is distinctly stated as the opening of his book. It is to narrate the great conflict of Greeks and barbarians; so that the glorious deeds of both may not perish and that their true causes may be known. The result of his large conception, which rises above the narrow nationalism of his successors, is that his history gives us more information about the state of ancient nations and their culture than all the other Greek historians put together. In *Thucydides* a higher science was combined with a higher art than in Herodotus. Scorning the art of the story-teller 'who seeks to please the ear rather than to speak the truth, he writes in the language of a scientist, after consulting all possible evidences, yet it is his laborious task which makes his style the culmination of Greek historical prose, "an ever-lasting possession, and eternal model. "His narrative is not content with a mere chronicle, it adds the motives of the actors and describes their most secret thoughts, as if the historian had been present and had heard them declared. This drawing of human character in accordance with the suggestions of the facts is particularly remarkable. But as his basis is

strictly human as opposed to the divine these motives are generally verified by the results and are never improbable. The comments *Polybius* about the duty of a true historian reach the dignity of a scientific treatise upon the subject — "Directly a man assumes the moral attitude of a historian, he ought to forget all considerations, such as love of one's friends, hatred of one's enemies. He must sometimes praise enemies and blame friends. For a living creature is rendered useless, if deprived of his eyes, so if you take truth from history, what is left is but an impracticable tale." But *Polybius* found no follower, and history passed from Greece to Rome in the guise of rhetoric. *Cicero* used it for drawing argument in oratory and example in education. *Livy* was uncritical and inaccurate; *Tacitus* was biased; and scientific history-writing slept a long sleep till the time of Italian and German Renaissance. *Lorenzo valla's* brilliant attack on the 'Donation of Constantine' and *Ulrich Von Hutten's* rehabilitation of *Henry IV* from monkish tales again revealed before the world the true significance of historic enquiry. But the Renaissance was destroyed by the Reformation, and scientific history as a handmaid of controversial animosity between the Magdeburg centuries and the Annals Ecclesiastics remained enveloped in an ecclesiastical atmosphere till the opening of the Eighteenth Century.

The Eighteenth Century marked the first great gain in the historic sense in the efforts of the various scholars to realise the spirit of the antique world. The science of diplomacy created by the genius of *Mabillon* was perfected, and the machinery of research was set agoing in all the archives of Europe. Manuscripts were collected, edited, published in a series of periodicals, and all old views were re-examined; many old fables, misconceptions and superstition were exploded. The systematic attempt to collect 'sources' made

by Leibnitz in France and Muratori in Italy resulted in the accumulation of immense materials which stand to-day as an inexhaustible quarry for generations to come. A new class of thinkers approached history from a different stand-point. Vico first studied it as the subject of a special science. Montesquien investigated the origin and effects of laws and institution. Adam Smith analysed the causes of national prosperity and decay, and Malthus sought for the laws of population. The 'law of continuity in phenomena' was clearly enunciated by Leibnitz. Though Voltaire hated the past and Rousseau despised the present, Burke and Herder preached about the unity of humanity, of the organic nature of civilization, of the debt of every age to its predecessors. Then Neibuhr in Germany and Guizot in France were in the nineteenth century among the first leaders of a new school who showed that the present could only be understood from the past, that the history of the past is a living reality, and its problems should be interpreted in the light of modern equivalents. In a well-known passage Neibuhr relates how in the work of regeneration Prussia after the battle of Jena, he went back to the study of the Roman people in order to strengthen his mind and that of his hearers. In the next place, he declared that he could not have understood Roman History without his intimate knowledge of the history of England. His third qualification was his critical faculty. He could construct a complete picture from fragments of the design. 'Neibuhr was the first to make ancient Rome a living political organism and to illustrate Rome and universal history by one another.' Guizot had a marvellous power of seizing and revealing the internal concatenation of events and the ideas that underlie them. His 'civilization in Europe' is a monumental endeavour and still remains as the most thoughtful introduction to the study of European history. His method was that of an anatomist, and he dissected the political, economic and intellectual structure of society, laid bare its elements and forces separately and in connection. But Rank is beyond comparison the greatest historian of modern times. In a reminiscence dictated at the age of 90, he

recalled that he had been struck by the difference in portraits of Charls the Bold and Louis XI in Quintin Durward and the pages of commines, and had determined to hold fast to facts. This aim to hold fast to facts to relate events as they actually happened made him approach history without any bias and presupposition, and write history for its own sake. His impersonal attitude towards history and his complete objectivity in art have made the historian a Recording Angel who gathers real facts and then holds a sort of mimic rehearsal of the Last Judgement. When the shadows of the dead rise before his sight from the past, he has before him whole generation at once. None are wholly guilty none are wholly blamers. His merit it to be judicial, to acquit the innocent with honour, to condemn the guilty without fear. But because he sits in judgement on all parties, and because he has to weigh and consider every shade of opinion on both sides equally, he must be thoroughly impartial. otherwise he prostitutes his high office." "Hero worship and anathemas are alike false art as well as shallow policy in History where Te Deum and commination services have no place." History is the school of statemanship. "To create any period of the past for our minds to understand it as it was unlike what went before it, unlike what came after it this is the chief aim of history," and for this purpose according to Bryce "four gifts are needed; unwearied diligence in investigation, a penetrating judgement which can fasten to the more essential points an imagination which we can vivify the fast, and that power over language which we call style." The scientific historian must start with two indispensable qualifications. "The one is political insight, the other is faculty of expression." The gift of expression may be acquired by practice and study. But political insight is a rare gift of nature it is genius for affairs. History writing in a true scientific spirit is a business full of peril chance, it is like walking over the crust o lava.

History, thou directors of our lives
Thou friend of virtue and enemy to vice
What was, what were the life
Of man at all but for thee?

MY ALMA-MATER

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At no stage of human civilisation the utility of educational institutions had ever been called in question- Their roll in the advancement of human culture is decisive and unquestionable. In all centres of human civilisation schools and colleges received active patronage of the court and the nursing care of the intelligent of the society. But our national education received a shocking set-back at the hands of our British Masters. The few educational Institutions that had been set up were alien in structure and flavour that hardly satisfied Indian sentiment. It was, in fact, an era of oppression and suppression of Indian National sentiment when advancement of national education was treated with suspense and establishment of educational institution was not viewed with equanimity. For education enlightens society and helps to bring into play the latent force of patriotism. To avoid this undesirable contingency, spread of education was viewed with disfavour. Even those who had successfully completed their educational career and had proved their ability was considered as radio-activated isotope potent enough to disrupt the British Colony in India. They were bought off and were admitted within the safety zone of Indian Civil Service, lest their ability and intelligence should form an alliance with much-dreaded nationalism.

At such a cross-road of cultural crisis, my Alma-Mater was born and since then she is burning the flaming torch of culture and education at such a remote village of Bengal. Many-a-time cyclonic gusts had sought to extinguish the flame, but the trusted torch-bearer my Alma-Mater-kept the torch burning even in the inclement weather of absolute bleakness.

In the inception her journey was not comfortable. Her existence was not enviable. She had to cross long and weary way and had to wage tough war depending solely on the unfailing friendship of the Hetampur Raj Family. With deep gratitude I mention the philanthropy of the Hetampur Raj family without whose benevolence my Alma-Mater would have not seen the light of the earth. The struggle for existence my Alma Mater had to face, developed in her the unique power of immunity to face future troubles and had assured her glorious existence. Her massive structure with colossal pillars are symbolic enough to bear the testimony to her untrailing stamina of ceaseless struggle. Her magnificent Gothic arches are decorated with fineries of fine carvings of white and glazed stucco that is of much architectural interest. This is her laurel of success.

In a country where men are born with debt and die in debt, education is a rare luxury of the fortunate few. Moreover, the apathy of the alien government will explain the paucity of educational opportunities in villages. At such a critical juncture of cultural crisis, my Alma-Mater came into being. Since then my village had been the seat of culture and education like the Nalanda of old. Education was brought within the reach of common people and pupils from different parts of Bengal and outside it flocked round my Alma-mater to enjoy the blessings of education. People got new lease of cultural life and new promise of glorious existence. Education became cheap and popular. The duty of educating the mass had decisive impact on the growth of Indian Nationalism. Many of the alumni of my Alma-Mater played

glorious parts in the struggle for Indian Independence and many more are still engaged in building the super-structure of new Indian. My pride for my Alma-mater is, therefore, not unjustified.

On the first day of my admission as a member of this Alma-Mater, what touched me most was the cordial relation between preceptors and their disciples. This was the ideal of the educational system in ancient India. This is our inheritance and we upheld the tradition with due emphasis and respect. Professors were freely approachable at all times. Their smiling faces encouraged and inspired us in the classes, in the play ground, in hostel and in the sick-bed. Our relation with them was easy and was based on affection and regard. Their paternal care and instruction have become valuable assets in our lives. Their sympathetic treatment reminds us of ancient 'Rishis' in their hermitages. In the calm rural atmosphere far from the industrial bustle of the town amid beauty and bounty of nature we learnt the lessons of life from our respected preceptors with complete tranquility of mind. Rural simplicity-

guided our life. Strike and non-co-operation with the college authority the most common feature of today's student-life never ruffled the serene atmosphere of my Alma-mater and never ventured to influence our cordial relation with our professors. With peace and bliss we sat at the feet of our Masters to learn the lessons on the art and philosophy and sang the song of humanity. The memory of the fugitive past still lingers in my mind with all freshness and "The thought of our past years in me doth breed perpetual benediction". My old Alma-Mater still stands on her old site, old trees still send the aromatic breeze, 'sun-shine in still a glorious birth' the placid calmness of the adjacent water still adds lustre to this magnificent temple, yet I feel that there has passed away a glory from my life and ask myself—"Whither is fled the visionary gleam?"

Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"

My old Alma Mater is on the wrong side of sixty. Will not Almighty bless her with another lease of long life to serve new India anew?

The End